

A BORN SOLDIER

By
John Strange Winter



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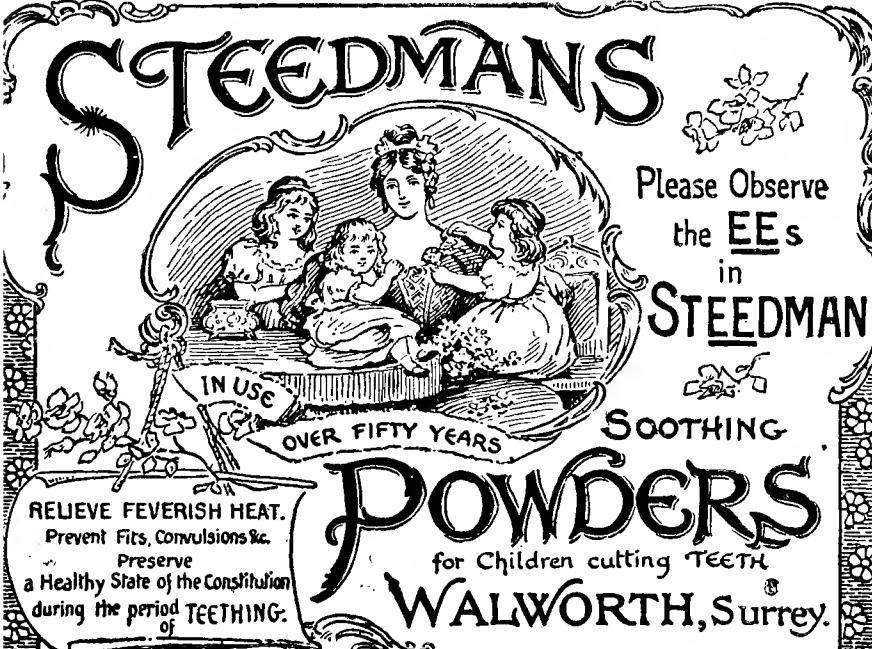
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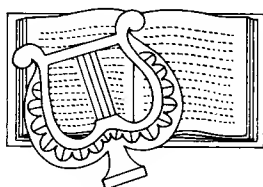


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A BORN SOLDIER

BY

JOHN STRANGE WINTER

Author of

'Bootles' Baby,' 'Army Society,'

'Cavalry Life,' 'Garrison Gossip,'

'In Quarters,' 'On March,'

'He Went for a Soldier,'

'The Other Man's Wife,' 'Only Human,'

'Aunt Johnnie,' 'Red-Coats,'

'A Seventh Child,' Etc.

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1897

TO

M R S S T A N N A R D,

MY MOTHER-IN-LAW

(‘DEAR GRANNIE’),

I AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATE

This Story

N MEMORY OF A DARK TIME PASSED THROUGH TOGETHER

WHILE IT WAS BEING WRITTEN

JOHN STRANGE WINTER.

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A BORN SOLDIER.

CHAPTER I.

PHIL JERVIS.

“Were all things certain, nothing would be sure;
Joy would be joyless, of misfortune free.”

EURIPIDES.

“TINKER,” said Phil Jervis, “fetch me a glass of brown sherry.”

“Yes, sir,” replied Tinker.

Phil Jervis sat down in the biggest armchair which his quarters contained and stretched out his feet to the roaring fire which blazed in the hideous grate.

“Ugh! It’s cold and damp and miserable. Beastly weather! Queer thing John Chinaman always turns us out for a field day when it is wet and raw and sodden. I believe he does it on purpose. By Jove, it’s enough to kill a chap!”

He pulled off his gauntlets and dropped them on to the nearest chair, then his white gloves, which were pretty well marked with the use of bridle and sword. He gradually divested himself of one belt after another, and made a valiant attempt to get out of his long boots. That, however, was beyond him, and he laid back in the chair again, rubbing his cold hands together.

“I wonder if it is true that John Chinaman is made of cast iron? I believe it is. Never ails anything;

always looks as if he had got one foot in the grave, but never gets it there. Wet, cold, sleet, rain, snow, heat, dust, all seem alike to him; and yet, I shouldn't like to be John Chinaman. No, that I shouldn't. Poor old John! Wonder what he'll do when his command is over and he's no longer able to pick out all the vilest days in the year to make six hundred men miserable on. Ugh! How chilled I am! It makes me quite pity myself to think of it."

At that moment Tinker returned with the brown sherry on a tray.

"Ah, that's better! You have had the best of it this morning, Tinker," he said, as he drained the glass.

"Yes, sir," said Tinker, "I thought of you several times. Mr. Malone, sir, he wanted to give me my stripes the other day, but I thinks to meself a man who doesn't know when he's got a good billet ought to be cow-hided."

"So you decided not to chuck me over, eh, Tinker?"

"I did that same, sir. So I says to Mr. Malone, I says, 'I don't see as how my master can possibly get on without me, sir,' and Mr. Malone, he says, 'Well, Tinker, I think you have got too good an opinion of yourself.' 'Perhaps, I have, sir,' says I, 'but I would rather not leave Mr. Jervis at present.'"

"Well now, there you are absolutely wrong, Tinker," said Phil Jervis promptly, "you know you mayn't have such a chance again of getting on. After all, it's every soldier's duty to get on as far in his profession as he possibly can. You made a great mistake."

"I don't think so, sir," replied the soldier, "I had a wretched time before I came to you, sir, and I'm happier than I've ever been in my life. If you don't want to get rid of me, sir, I don't want to get rid of you."

"I don't want to get rid of you," said Jervis, quickly, "you do all right for me. But how would you do if I happened to leave the Service."

The soldier thought for a moment, then looked at the ceiling and scratched the crown of his head, looked down at the floor, smoothed his chin with his finger and thumb,

"Well, sir," he said in a deliberate voice at last, "it 'ud be quite possible to buy me orf."

"Oh—oh—oh—I see. Yes, that's it, is it? However, I haven't left the Service yet, Tinker. When I do, we will think about it. Now, just get these boots off for me, will you?"

The boots were tight and wet, and needed each of them a long pull and a strong pull before Phil Jervis was free of them. He sighed with relief as each one was safely off, and Tinker, with the air of a man who knew what was expected of him without being told, drew a little fringe-trimmed table to his master's left elbow, and set upon it a stand of pipes and a huge jar of tobacco. Phil Jervis filled his pipe and set it agoing before he got further out of his uniform. Then by degrees he got rid of one garment after another and was soon warmly and comfortably arrayed in a suit of thick, blanket-like tweed.

"By the bye, were there any letters for me, Tinker?" he asked when he was once more settled down in the big chair.

"I'll see, sir."

"Wonder if John Chinaman has got out of his uniform yet. Poor old chap! What a pity he don't get married! Don't know on the whole, when a Colonel is happily married, whether a married Colonel isn't better for the comfort of the regiment than a bachelor. If poor old John Chinaman had any pursuits except soldiering he would not be so bad; but he hasn't a second idea in his head—field day, drill, red book: red book, drill, field day—besting

the Commissariat people and arranging penny-readings free gratis and for nothing for the ranks, are his only ideas of amusement. Poor old chap! What a good thing it would be if he were to get married."

Up to that time, it had never occurred to Phil Jervis himself to get married. He was five and twenty years old, was of a fair height, of a strong, lithe, athletic build, had plenty of nice brown hair, rather inclined to be curly; he had a clean-shaven, shrewd, good-looking face, excellent teeth, and a cleft in his chin. As a soldier, he was as good as the average cavalry officer who has got through his examination by the skin of his teeth; he shirked his work whenever it was practicable, and held his life as cheaply as he was then holding his cherry wood pipe. He was popular with the men, particularly the men of his own troop, was adored by his servants, faithfully loved by his horses and dogs, and had many accomplishments.

He could play a tune on his chin with his knuckles—and, mind you, it is not every man who can play a tune on his chin with his knuckles. He could whistle all the operas and fashionable songs, and was commonly called "the Regimental Chevalier." He played a bit on the piano, and was a really admirable performer on the penny whistle. On the banjo he was proficient, and he knew more card tricks than any other man in the White Horse. Nor did the list of his accomplishments end here. Heaven knows where he had picked it up, for it was a faculty to which he never owned, but Phil Jervis was exceedingly clever at modelling, and more than once when the officers of the White Horse were assembled at dinner, one or other of them had been surprised to find instead of the usual roll of bread within his dinner napkin, a bold and admirable caricature of himself.

In fact, there was scarcely a room in the officers'

quarters that did not possess some treasure of this kind; and tradition had it that somewhere or other there was still extant a caricature of Colonel Weaver-Marston himself, a caricature which took the form of a grinning Mandarin, wearing a Chinese costume, with wagging head and projecting tongue, while at the base of the bust was carved in deep letters the two words "John Chinaman." Needless to say, this had never figured on the dinner table of the officers' mess; but it had appeared in a mysterious manner as if it had been evolved out of space. The likeness to the Colonel was inimitable, and from that day "John Chinaman" had been his accepted name for the use and knowledge of every officer in the regiment excepting himself. Everybody had wanted the little image, and gradually the replicas thereof had become so numerous that the value of the original as an original had disappeared altogether. Nobody, however, in the regiment had been willing to father these little images, and when the Colonel himself chanced to notice one during a semi-official visit to one of his officers' rooms, and had admired it so much that he wished to buy one like it, it was impossible for the owner thereof to say more than that he had had it given to him, and did not know whence it had come. But the real culprit, Phil Jervis, never complied with the Colonel's wish of sending him the caricature of himself, all unrecognising of its relationship as he was.

Tinker presently returned with a batch of letters, the post corporal having come in while the regiment was out of barracks engaged in the delightful duty of a field day. There was an invitation to a dinner party at the Deanery, and one for Sunday evening supper at the house of one of the doctors in the town. There were two letters in feminine handwritings—one from a little married woman in London, who was by way of having a *tendresse* for the good-looking dragoon:

another from a girl whom he had left behind him in the last town in which the regiment had been quartered. He was not exactly bored by these letters. The little married lady held out a delicate suggestion of a dinner of four at the Grosvenor with a theatre to follow, and added, in a careless and casual kind of way, that if he could get leave she intended to ask a great friend of hers and her particular man, as her husband was going to shoot in Yorkshire that week and would not be able to join the party.

"That means two hansoms," said Phil Jervis to himself. "I wonder if I can persuade John Chinaman to give me a couple of days' leave."

The other letter was simple in tone. It was not marked by the studious care which characterised the epistle of the married woman—that might have been shouted from the housetops. This one was full to overflowing of tenderness and regret, of anxiety to see him again, of conjectures whether he had forgotten her or not.

"Poor little soul! I must send her a box of sweeties," said Phil Jervis, crumbling the letter into a ball and throwing it on the fire.

He opened the next letter with a kind of air of relief, as if he somewhat regretted that episode in his last billet.

"Pity I let her start writing to me," his thoughts ran, as he tore open the envelope, "always a pity when one does that. It seemed kinder at the time, too, but after all, there's nothing like burning your boats behind you. Poor little soul!"

He drew the letter out of the envelope. Oh, just a reminder from his tailor that a cheque on account would be desirable.

"I'd better send him a cheque to-night, I think," he said to himself.

There was only one letter left. It was an invitation to a dance at a very nice house about three miles

from Blankhampton, not exactly what you would call county people, but very nearly so.

"I may as well go to that," said Phil, as he put the letter down.

Just then there was a sound of footsteps along the bare and echoing corridor without and a vigorous thump sounded on the door.

"Come in," roared Phil. "Oh, it's you, is it?" he remarked, as a figure in light grey clothes came into the room.

"Yes. I came to ask you if you were going to the town."

"Yes, I am."

"Because I will go with you if you are."

"All right."

"Are you ready to go now?"

"Yes. I am going in five minutes."

"Are you going to Mrs. Murgatroyd's?"

"I rather thought of it."

"Well, you see, there isn't much to do on an off day, is there? I don't mind going to Mrs. Murgatroyd's if you are going, but I hate going to these places by myself. So we may as well go down together, don't you think?"

"My dear chap," said Jervis, "I should be delighted. I wanted to look in on John Chinaman for a minute. Do you happen to know whether he is about?"

"What do you want?"

"I want a two days' leave."

"Oh, I shouldn't go this afternoon if I were you. He has just discovered that a drain somewhere at the back of those watercart sheds is queerish, and he is raising the very devil over it. I'd put it off, old chap, till the morning if I were you. Ask him when you've got your uniform on, and then he will be more amenable to reason."

"All right! By the bye, is there anything wrong?"

"Yes, I believe there's something wrong. Grating got stuffed up or something. One would think it was the battle of Inkermann over again to hear John Chinaman talking about it; and there he is standing now watching it being cleared out, and explaining the system to the men. As if it were any use explaining a system to a lot of private soldiers!"

"Poor old John!" laughed Jervis, "he certainly does do his best for them all. I don't believe the men will ever get another Colonel who will try to treat them as if they were rational beings and explain systems to them. Poor old chap! He don't get much reward for it."

"Ah, well, he's Colonel. He's got his reward."

"And by and by," cried Jervis, "he'll bloom out into a D.A.A.G., and then he can explain systems without making himself a nuisance to anybody. After all, we've got to listen to him, but nobody has got to listen to a D.A.A.G. By the bye, Stonor, won't you have a pipe before you go?"

"No, thanks; but I'll have a cigarette if you want to finish your pipe."

"Do, old chap. There are plenty in that silver box up there."

"Thanks," and then Stonor sat down, and the two went on talking about John Chinaman and all manner of regimental matters, while all the time through Jervis's brain there ran the half-tender, half-despairing words of the girl he had left behind him.

CHAPTER II.

PRUDENCE AND INCLINATION.

“ True happiness
Consists not in the multitude of friends,
But in the worth and choice.”

BEN JONSON.

THE following morning Jervis took the first opportunity of hinting gently and deferentially to the Colonel that he was very desirous of having a two days' leave during the following week. In spite of the drain trouble of the previous afternoon, Colonel Weaver-Marston was in a very pleasant mood, and he wrote "J.W.M." in the corner of the necessary permit without asking a single question or making any remark whatsoever. It must be confessed that, on the whole, that particular grant of leave did not make Phil Jervis so happy as such a favour usually did. He did not absolutely want to go to London to dine and do a theatre with the little woman at whose instigation he had asked for leave; as a matter of fact, he cared nothing about her. She amused him a little sometimes, and generally bored him a good deal; and moreover, she took such elaborate precautions that their little affair should not be known to her husband that Phil felt always more or less like a horse in a kicking-strap. He was haunted, too, by a sort of feeling that, having got a few hours' leave, he ought really to go and spend it in the town which they had left three months before, and he would like to have done so. He had been fond of the place, and he was something more than fond of the little girl who was hungering and yearning to see him

again; and yet, he did not feel that it would be politic to venture to go there at all. She was everything that was sweet and good and charming, but he had never contemplated marrying her for a moment, and he did not want her to think that he had any such thought in his mind.

"You see," he was in the way of arguing, "a wife makes such a devil of a difference to a fellow in the Service; and when one has only just enough ballast to keep one's own boat upright, it is fatal to make the same ballast divide, and possibly half again over other craft."

He did not want to marry: if he had wanted to marry anybody—that is to say, if he had been very rich—he would probably have settled everything with Katey before he had left Danford for the autumn manœuvres. If he had been a marrying man he would have liked to marry her; but he was not a marrying man, and he could not afford to send prudence to the wall. But all the same, a pair of dewy blue eyes looking out from under a mass of ruddy bronze hair haunted him very persistently.

"I say, old chap," said Gwyn to him that night at dinner, "you look very down in the mouth. What's the matter?"

Phil pulled himself together with a shake.

"The matter? Nothing, nothing; I'm all right. I'm going to town for a couple of days next week. I never was more fit in my life."

"Oh, I thought you seemed dull," was Gwyn's comment.

"Not the least in the world. By the bye, you heard that story about Moore, didn't you?"

"Moore? No. What about him?" said some one at the other end of the table.

"Oh, a splendid joke. The Colonel asked Moore last night how it was that drains were always getting choked. I don't know whether the Colonel wanted

to know for information, or whether he wanted to find out how great a fool Moore was on the subject of drains; but Moore looked up at him in his little Scotch terrier dog sort of way, and jerked out 'I'll give it up, sir. I never guessed a riddle in my life.' "

"No!" exclaimed the other.

"Fact, I assure you, and the chief's face was a study, I can tell you. Poor old John Chinaman!"

"What did the Colonel say?"

"He looked rather astonished for a minute, and then he said in his stiffest voice, 'I asked you a question, Mr. Moore, not a riddle. When I take to asking riddles, I shall not put them to my subalterns.' But Moore was quite equal to the occasion. He answered without a moment's hesitation, 'I am sure I am very sorry, sir. It never occurred to me that you were serious. I am afraid I don't know anything about drains; but I should think that a drain gets choked up when something not liquid goes down it.' 'A very proper answer,' said the Colonel, 'but, of course, the great question is how to prevent matter that is not liquid from going down the drains.' "

"I wonder when I shall see you again," rang through Jervis's head, and he leaned his head upon his hand and, closing his eyes, saw for a moment in fancy that sweet little face once more.

"I'm sure you have got something on your mind, Jervis," said Gwyn.

Phil looked up again.

"No, no, not at all. I was thinking about something."

"That's bad. I bet a fiver it's a woman," said Gwyn, sardonically, at which Phil laughed, and adroitly turned the conversation. But, somehow, try as he would, he could not get little Katey out of his mind. Perhaps she was thinking of him a good

deal, and that made his thoughts turn towards her. He did not mean to marry her; he could not afford to marry her; but, somehow, the little witch had taken possession of his heart, and would not be ousted from it. Nevertheless, he made his arrangements for spending his short leave in London; and while he wrote a very guarded epistle to Mrs. Paget, he sent a large box of sweetmeats, and what he had pleased to call a sympathetic letter to the little girl, Katey, whom he had left behind at Danford.

He received Katey's answer just as he was starting for London, when Tinker's wooden voice at his elbow said, "Letters, sir."

Phil Jervis quite jumped when he saw the thick packet addressed in poor little Katey's conspicuous handwriting lying on the top of the batch which the postman had brought him. He took them off the tray and thrust them into his pocket, finished what he was about, and, with a parting instruction or two to his servant, went out to the cab which was waiting for him below. It was a hansom cab of rather a ramshackle description, and Phil and his portman-leau were soon on their way to the station. He did not look at his letters until he was safely on the road to London. He left Katey's packet until the last, and opened it with a sigh that was almost a groan.

"You darling to send me those sweeties," she began. "It isn't that I care the value of a penny about sweets as sweets, but your thought of me has made me so happy. I have been in heaven ever since they arrived; it seems like desecration to eat even one of them, but I have eaten one or two, and they taste the sweeter to me because you sent them."

This is a very fair sample of the entire letter. It was very long; full of details of her daily life, of her feelings, of her anxieties, and her hopes for the future—the anxieties that were certain to come to the worst

issue, the hopes which he knew would never be fulfilled, the feelings which were stirred only for him and because of him, and of the life which was, since he had left Danford, not a life, but a mere existence. It ended, poor little soul, in this fashion,

“For life or death, for good or ill, always your own, Katey.”

It is only fair to say that Phil Jervis arrived at King's Cross in a towering temper, nor did his mood improve as he found himself rattling along in a hansom, certainly a better one than that which had carried him from the barracks to Blankhampton station, towards his hotel in St. James's. The contrast between the deadly earnestness of the girl who loved him and the artificiality of the worldly little woman about whom he did not care so much as a button, but with whom he was going to dine that night, jarred painfully upon his feelings. After all, it might be a good thing if he made up his mind to throw in his lot with little Katey—he hardly knew—but certain is it that had Mrs. Paget been free and endowed with millions, under no circumstances could Phil Jervis ever have brought himself to marry her. Yet he had given this woman, about whom he did not care the proverbial two straws, the benefit of his two days' leave which he had denied to the girl, who would have regarded even so short a visit as a foretaste of Paradise. Things are very strange and odd in this world, and sometimes men are the least kind to those they love the best.

He duly arrived at the Grosvenor at the appointed time, enquired for Mrs. Paget, and then found that he was the guest of a Colonel Liddell. He had never happened to meet Colonel Liddell. Mrs. Paget's bosom friend—Mrs. Sandars-Johnstone—he had seen several times, but it must be owned that he would rather not have been the guest of a man whom he had never seen. He was the first of the party to

arrive, and he wandered about the big drawing-room, with its many chintz-covered chairs, and its somewhat inhospitable and barren look, disconsolately enough for ten minutes or so, when his host walked into the room. The two men looked at one another as a couple of dogs very often do—very much as if the next moment might find them fighting. Then Colonel Liddell broke the ice, and in a very stand-offish tone asked him if he was Mr. Jervis. He replied that he was; after which, they fraternised in a defensive kind of way, if the truth be told, each man wondering what the other was thinking of him. The two ladies came together. Mrs. Paget, who was a little piquant woman, was radiant in black and pale blue. She was but simply dressed and wore no jewels beyond a diamond crescent on the left side of her bodice—a crescent like a young summer moon, which gleamed and glinted in the gaslight and seemed, in a mysterious and subtle way, to beckon him as if it were a thing of life. The other lady, who was all in black, was tall and very handsome; and Phil grasped without any outside information that it was for the sake of her bright eyes that his host had been willing, not to say eager, to give this particular entertainment.

The dinner passed off as such dinners usually do. The ladies' room at the Grosvenor is not usually a scene of wild festivity and hilarity. There was only one other table occupied, so that the tall, deliberate gentlemen in black plush were in no fear of getting their golden garters disarranged by undue hurry. A party of four at a small dinner-table cannot, in the ordinary course of things, have any private conversation whatever; and it was not until the two couples were safely seated in two hansoms that either Phil or Mrs. Paget uttered a single word that might not have been spoken before the whole world. As soon as they had started, Mrs. Paget turned eagerly towards him—

"Well," she said, "had you any trouble to get off?"

"Not the least. I asked for leave, and here I am."

"And how long have you got?"

"Two days."

"Two days!" in an accent of extreme surprise
"Oh, Phil, and how much did you ask for?"

"I asked for two days."

"Oh!—why didn't you ask for a week?"

"Because if I had done so, I probably should not have got even two days."

"You might have tried it on."

"Well, I might, but I didn't see the good."

"But you wanted more?"

"Yes, of course, I always want more leave than I can get—every man always does, but they can't have it. It was a great chance my getting this—a great chance—but a week was simply out of the question."

"Then you go back——"

"The day after to-morrow."

"Oh, well, we must make the best of it."

She talked on until they reached the theatre, but, somehow, Phil Jervis could not in any way attune himself to the situation. There had always been a sort of love-making between them, not violent love-making, you know, because Mrs. Paget had too great a sense of the conventionalities for that, but a pressure of the hand, a lingering touch of the fingers, and a dwelling on her words, an archness in her upward look. For months past they had gone through the whole gamut of tender signs, which are the small change of an unfortunate love; but to-night, although he had not seen her for about six months, he could not help seeming utterly prosaic. He realised that she was made up, that her hair was tinted too brightly for the shining copper-like tones to be out of Nature's workshop. He realised that she was not young as she had been, that she used a great deal of powder, and was not above heightening the effect of

her already dark eyebrows and eyelashes. She was exquisitely dressed, of course, and suitably to the occasion; but he had more than a suspicion that she knew the use of belladonna. She had a rather high-pitched society voice, and said "don't he," and "ain't it," with the fluency and verve of a costermonger. She clipped off her final "gs," and told him among other things that "she had positively seen *hundreds* of people since she had come up from the North." But he was so struck by her intense artificiality. She seemed to be everything that she was not, and in truth, Phil Jervis was bored to extinction, even though the distance from the Grosvenor Club to the Gaiety Theatre is not a very long one for two people in a good cab.

"Why didn't I go to Danford?" his vexed thoughts ran. "*She* at least would not have revolted me as this little shrew does. Poor old Paget! What a devil of a time he must get with this little cat trying to circumvent him week in, week out!"

By the time they reached the theatre, he had quite decided in his own mind that the next few days of leave he got, he would go to Danford and spend them in cheering up the girl he had left there, the Katey, who—"for life or death, for good or ill," was always—his.

At the theatre, he and she sat nearest to the stage, and there they had unlimited chances of private and confidential conversation; but Phil Jervis had nothing to say. He did not want to know what she had been doing, nor how many pairs of gloves she had won at the last race meeting she had attended; nor whether Paget kept her short for her milliner's bill; nor even whether she had more than a suspicion that he was not above bribing her maid to keep an eye on her correspondence. He was bored—utterly bored, and he showed it. He was not the least bit sorry when the play had come to an end. Somebody suggested

supper, and both the ladies exclaimed in delight at the prospect; so they all went off to a smart restaurant, where they had the usual midnight dainties of oysters and Chablis, grilled bones and champagne. And, at last, Phil Jervis tumbled into bed, feeling very much as if he had been through three field days in the course of a single one.

The next day was not very much more satisfactory. He went to lunch with Mrs. Sandars-Johnstone in a smart little maisonette in Piccadilly. Colonel Liddell and Mrs. Paget were there also; and after lunch, they went off to a big party in Queen's Gate, where they sat a good deal on the stairs, and seemed to be flirting desperately. He gave the ladies dinner that night at the Savoy; and then they went to the Haymarket, where they had a very big box, and it must be owned attended very little to the play. And the next day Phil Jervis went back to Blankhampton, for once thoroughly glad that his two days' leave was over.

It was nearly nine o'clock when he reached the officers' quarters. There was not a soul about; his brother officers were all at mess. The long corridors were absolutely deserted, and there was not even so much as a servant in sight. Half expecting to find Tinker in his rooms, Phil Jervis mounted the stairs and threw open the door. There was a good fire blazing in the grate, and several lighted candles illumined the room; but Phil stopped short on the threshold, with an exclamation of surprise dashed with dismay—"Katey!" he said.

CHAPTER III.

A WRONG COURSE.

"The flighty purpose ne'er is overtook,
Unless the deed go with it."

MACBETH.

WHEN Phil Jervis ejaculated the word "Katey!" with volumes of astonishment and surprise, not undashed with dismay in his tones, the girl got up and flew to meet him.

"Oh, Phil," she cried, "oh, Phil! I couldn't stand them any longer—I have come to you."

He did not kiss her or welcome her in any way, but stood staring at her with every token of annoyance visibly printed upon his face.

"But what on earth did you come here for?" he asked bluntly. "You can't stop here—you must have been mad—you must have been out of your mind. Don't you understand that this is a barrack, that some of the other fellows may be coming in at any moment and see you? What could have possessed you to come here, of all places in the world?"

The girl's face fell and all the radiance died out of her eyes, and instead of it a blank consternation seemed to overspread her features. "But, Phil," she said, reproachfully, "how many times have you told me that if I was in trouble, I was to come to you?"

"But—good God! I didn't mean like this—to my rooms! You had pen and ink and paper—you could have written to me. Good Heavens, child, it is as much as your whole reputation is worth to have come here. You can't stop here—it is out of the question—it is impossible."

"I won't go back," she said, shrinking a little away from him.

"Well, that is as may be. You have taken your fate into your own hands and you must do what you like with your life. One thing is very certain, Katey, here you cannot stop; it is impossible, it is out of the question."

"You told me to come to you," she repeated, half doggedly, "you told me not once, nor twice, but many times that if ever I wanted a friend at any time I had only to come to you, that you would take care of me, that you would stand between me and the world, that I could put my life into your keeping—absolutely, and without question; and now that I have done it, now that I have—have left my people—for—ever, you have no welcome for me, you only throw me back upon myself and say that I must be mad and that I cannot stop. Oh," very reproachfully, "why did you make me those promises, Phil? Are you not even glad to see me?"

She looked so pretty, so innocent, so utterly attractive in her great distress, that Phil Jervis had hard work to keep up an appearance of sternness. He longed to be able to take her in his arms and to kiss the sweet trembling lips into calmness, to assure her that with him she was safe and would be safe for ever, and take that terrible light of living agony out of the soft dewy eyes. But he did not give way to his natural inclinations, he did not yield to himself. Indeed, Phil Jervis was in some respects an odd mixture; underneath all his tenderness of heart and real affection for this girl there was a curious strain of iron strength of purpose, and in spite of the natural temptation to forget this (with which her mere presence inspired him), yet his innate sense of right was too strong to permit such a temptation to prevail.

"But, my dear child," he said, "what on earth induced you to leave home in this way?"

"I could not stand the life any longer," she said, looking all in a moment as dogged and resolute as ever he was able to do. "I—I—hate them all. I loathe them all. Yesterday, John Sylvester asked me to marry him—John Sylvester!—to marry him! And I told him that I would rather die."

"But, my dear child, why need you have put it in that uncompromisingly plain way? If your cousin John asked you to marry him, it was the greatest compliment that he could pay you, and you need not have regarded it as an insult."

"But it *was* an insult," she burst out, "from him to me. How dared he ask me? He knows that I hate him—he knows how I loathe him. His father said I was very sensible to have refused him. His father wants him to marry Anna Pulleston. Anna Pulleston will have a very comfortable fortune when her father dies, and my uncle would like his son to marry where money is. He thinks that I am the last girl in the world that his son should marry, because I not only have not a penny, but because I am in their debt for food and clothing and lodging already. My aunt, with all the unreasonableness that characterises everything that she does, is torn between her joy that I said no, and her fury that I dared to say it—fury that I didn't jump at her beautiful boy! And the hideous wretch himself declares that it is perfectly useless my saying it, perfectly useless his father opposing the marriage, and useless for his mother to say anything about it—good, bad, or indifferent. He says that I have got to marry him; and then, he threw you into my face, and said that until you came and put ideas into my head, I should have been thankful and glad to be Mrs. John Sylvester—I, who hate the very name of Sylvester! I, who loathed myself when I was only a child of sixteen, because I was the helpless dependent of these hateful people! There was no question then of my marrying my cousin John—none what-

ever. He didn't want me, I didn't want him. I kept out of his road, because, if I was in it, he generally had a stone or a pinch or something to make me remember him by. It was not for two years after that that he began to take ideas of marrying me into his wooden head, and, even then, he said nothing. Nobody would have imagined that he had any such thought in him. Before I knew you, I used to think and wonder and plan how I could earn my bread so as to get away from them—so as to be dependent upon myself alone. And, then you came, and everything was different. I put up with all their hateful ways, with all their sneers, and the horrid feeling that I was living on charity because—because—you told me that you would take care of me, and I believed you."

"Yes, I know all that, of course, but why do it in this way?" Jervis replied. "Of course, they all know where you are. Think of the scandal, think of the unpleasantness for me in the regiment—I shall have the Colonel down on me as sure as fate. It will be all over the barracks in ten minutes! Even if I wanted to marry you, I couldn't marry you out of my own quarters! You must see what a mad thing you have done."

For a moment she sat as if turned to stone, then retreated from him towards the fire-side. Jervis looked impatiently back and turned the key in the lock. "At least we will keep this between ourselves if we can," he said, vexedly. Then he went towards the hearth and rested his elbow against the wall. "What did you say? What excuse did you make for coming here?"

"I made no excuse," she replied. "I drove up in a cab and asked for you."

"Oh yes; but I meant at the other end—to your own people?"

"I made no excuse at all. I came away."

"You left no letter?"

"No."

"You gave no explanation?"

"No."

"But you came away and never told them anything?"

"Nothing. What was there to tell them? I thought they would find out soon enough."

"Yes, indeed," said Philip brusquely. "Yes, indeed. But tell me, who did you see when you came here?"

"I—I—only saw your servant, so far as I know."

"Oh, Tinker?"

"I believe so."

"How long have you been here?"

"Oh, not very long—perhaps an hour."

"H'm! And Tinker didn't object to your stopping?"

"Well, yes he did," said Katey, "he objected very much; but I told him I must see you—that I must stop. You see, I was obliged to stop."

"My dear girl, why couldn't you go to an hotel? If you had gone to an hotel in the town and you had sent a note up to me, everything would have been different."

"I couldn't," she answered; "I had not money enough."

Phil fairly groaned, "As if that mattered! You must have known perfectly well that I would rather pay anything than have you set foot in here at all. You could have gone to an hotel straight from the train—you couldn't now. You could have gone by yourself—but I can't take you to an hotel, it is out of the question—it is impossible. You must go back. There's nothing else for it."

"Go back?"

"Yes, I am very sorry—I am awfully cut up, but I don't see what else you can do. You can't stop

here, that's certain—you simply can't stop here. You cannot go to an hotel at this time of night—it is half-past nine now. You will—you will—have to go back again."

"Not back to Danford."

"Your people live at Danford, don't they?"

"I won't go back to that house! I won't go back to those people! I trusted in you and believed every word you said to me. I thought you—meant—to—marry—me."

The words were positively wrung from her, and she uttered them as if they blistered her tongue. She never looked at him. She was still standing, still clasping her hands together as if she would gain some moral support from those frail and white little fingers.

"My dear child," said Jervis, somewhat more kindly, "I have not asked you to marry me. I never told you that I intended to marry you. I am not by way of being a marrying man—I hate to say this to you—I have always been very fond of you—I don't deny it for a moment, but it would be the ruin of me if I married anybody just now, though I am afraid I made you care for me."

"Yes," she said, scarcely above her breath.

"And even," he went on relentlessly, "even if I had felt that I should marry you sooner or later, the fact that you are capable of doing a thing so mad, so thoughtless, so inconsiderate as this, would be enough to make any man stop and ask what he was doing. When a man marries, Katey, he wants a help, not a mere fancy. Still less does he wish to have a woman at whom every man he knows can point the finger of scorn. I—I—don't like wounding you—I don't like hurting you, but you have made me very angry to-night. You have done a thing you have no right to do. It was a mad thing to do, and you and I may suffer from it all the rest of our lives. I can't think

that any words of mine could have really been the means of making you so blind to all your best interests as you have seemed to-day."

There was a moment's silence. He was still vexedly leaning against the wall, looking into the fire. For the first time Katey Vincent turned and looked at him.

"Phil," she said, softly, at last, "did you mean *nothing* of what you said to me?"

He turned towards her, impatiently. "In the sense in which you have taken it, no—nothing. How could I mean that you should do anything so mad as come here?" he asked, with unconcealed annoyance. "I would have come back. I was thinking about you only to-day. I have been to town for a couple of days on—on—business; I was thinking about you all the time, wishing that I could have gone to Danford instead. I made up my mind on the way down from town that the next leave I got, I would go back to Danford and spend it with you—but that was when I thought you were a sensible girl, a reasonable girl, one I didn't imagine capable of doing this sort of thing. I can't think what I am going to do with you. It is such a long way to Danford."

"I am not going back to Danford," she broke in.

"You are certainly not going to stop here," he rejoined sharply.

"No," she said, "I am not going to stop here; but equally certain is it that I am not going back to that house."

"My dear child," he said, in a tone as if he were trying to reason with a creature whose mind was unhinged, "in the name of common ordinary sense I ask you what else can you do? What other course can you take? It is all very well in story-books and in plays for young ladies to go out and conquer the world without any weapons; you are without weapon of any kind—you have no money, you have no know-

ledge of the world, no home, no shelter—nothing to fight the world with. I don't see what choice you have—I don't really. I don't see what you can do but go back again, and, after all, they are your own people. They have the right to provide for you, you are their own flesh and blood. You never told me that they grudged your being with them. Evidently your cousin John does not wish the family to be relieved of the burden of keeping you."

She looked up again. "Would you advise me to go back and marry my cousin, John Sylvester?" she asked in a hard, cold, calculating tone.

"No; not to marry the fellow. You don't care for him. No girl ought to marry any man she does not care for."

"Then I shall never marry," said the girl, in a stifled voice.

"Oh, no, don't say that. You don't know what the future holds for you—we none of us do. I may be able to marry you myself some day, Katey—to ask you, that is, if you will have me. But not now, it—it—I am sorry to say it, but it is out of the question. Still, the great thing with us is how to patch up this dreadful mistake that you have made. Let me see, where's my Bradshaw? Ah, I know."

He turned back to the chair upon which he had set his portmanteau, opened it and took out his Bradshaw. "Now, let me see, it is getting on for ten o'clock. Dear, dear, what a pity it is so late! What a pity it is such a long way to Danford! How long did it take you to get here?"

"I started at twelve o'clock," she said, in a choking voice.

"So early as that? Where would they think you were going?"

"Oh, they thought I was going to spend the night with Flo Marston."

"Flo Marston at Appleton?" he asked, naming a village some five or six miles from Danford.

"I do often go out there to spend a day or two," she replied.

"Ah, well, that simplifies matters a good deal. Then they won't miss you until to-morrow, at least, I suppose not."

"I suppose not," said she, in a dull lifeless tone.

Something in her voice made him look up at her sharply and keenly, "Have you had any lunch to-day, Katey?" he asked.

"No."

"Or dinner?"

"No. I had a bun on the way."

"A bun! Have you had nothing to eat since breakfast?"

"It doesn't matter," she said indifferently.

"Oh, by Jove, doesn't it! You can't go back without dinner. We may as well have dinner together. It will perhaps stop people talking."

He went to the door and opening it shouted "Tinker! Tin—ker!"

"Yes, sir," came back from the distance. In a moment, the servant came running up to the door. Jervis went outside and closed it behind him. "I say, Tinker, my—my sister has come to see me on very urgent business, and she will have some dinner with me before she returns. Go down to the mess and tell them to send up dinner for two at once; and just tell anybody you see about that I don't want to be disturbed."

"Yes, sir," said Tinker. There was a slight twinkle in the man's eyes which did not escape his master's keen and annoyance-sharpened observation. "Tell them to send up a bottle of champagne with it," was his last order as he turned back into the room, his anger which had somewhat subsided, all up at boiling point once more. The twinkle in Tinker's eyes mean-

while had deepened to a broad grin which, as he went quickly along the corridor, overspread his entire countenance.

"Hullo, Tinker!" was the greeting with which he was received in the kitchen which he shared with several other officers' servants, "Wot's up? You look as if you had some prime joke on; wot's up, old fellow?"

"My guvner has got his sister come to see him, that's all," replied Tinker, grinning still more broadly.

"His sister? Oh, well, there's nothing very wonderful about that."

"Well, as it 'appens, there is," said Tinker, who invariably became absolutely "h"-less and grammar-less when in the presence of his equals, though he spoke quite passably when in communication with his master. "The fact of my master having a sister come to see him is what you might call a reglar physical phenomenum because his mother never had no dorter, that's all!"

This sally of wit was received with roars of laughter which continued to peal forth again and again as Tinker wended his way to the mess kitchens, and were wafted to the quarters above where Jervis was trying to make out the trains for Katey's return to Danford. He had heard roars of laughter from the officers' kitchens many times during his six years of service, but he had never before felt that they might possibly be directed at himself. That night they cut him like a lash and made him more angry with Katey than ever.

CHAPTER IV.

A DEAD FAILURE.

“Awake the Present! What the Past has sown
Is in its harvest garnered, reaped, and grown.”
DICKENS.

MIND, Phil Jervis was not a squeamish young man, not by any means. If any one of the charming young damsels then living in Blankhampton had penetrated the sanctity of his quarters professedly for a “lark,” he would have been one with them, and would have probably out-Heroded Herod in the enjoyment of the episode; but what horrified and dismayed him so much was the fact that the girl whom he knew to be devoted to himself, whom he had always regarded as a shy, shrinking, modest and dainty little lady should, without warning, without invitation, have suddenly cast her whole life upon his mercy in the plain expectation that he would marry her. If he had known that Katey was alone, wretched, taunted by one side of her family for her poverty, and her dependence, while another member thereof was trying to goad her into an unwilling marriage, he would have promptly gone to the rescue and have borne her in her triumph out of all her troubles. To her want of fortune he would never have given a thought. Her love for him, and his daily growing affection for her would have been enough. But to be thus forced at the point of the bayonet as it were into a marriage which he himself had not suggested, raised every feeling of opposition of which his nature was capable.

“Let me see, there is a train to town at eleven-fifteen—eleven-fifteen. That gets in at five minutes past four. Good Heavens! I cannot let you be

landed in London at four o'clock in the morning! No, that's altogether impossible. Why, you can't go to-night!"

"Couldn't I stay in the station?" she asked.

"Good Heavens, no; of course you couldn't! And if I were to take you to an hotel—but there, I am well-known in town. You know, Katey, there is nothing for this but hushing the whole thing up. Look here, you shall stay here to-night. I will give up this room to you, you can lock yourself in, and you'll be as safe as a church. I can get a shakedown in one of the other fellow's rooms. Do you see?"

"Yes," she said quietly.

"And in the morning I will get a cab. I suppose you have got a veil, because, you know, several of the officers know you by sight?"

"Yes, I know they do. I thought of that. I had a thick veil on when I came."

"Very good. I will get the cab and get you off by the eight o'clock train; there will be nobody stirring except the orderly officer, and we can keep out of his way. Then I will telegraph to Flo Marston and tell her that you are on your way to her, that she is not to go into Danford, or to go near your people. Do you see? That will make everything quite easy. You go straight up to her and you can stay the night there, and go home the day after. Then nobody at home will know anything about this folly of yours."

"I shall know it myself," said Katey, in the same stifled voice.

"Oh, well, you will forget it—you will forget it. You said just now that you would not go back to the Sylvesters. But you are not going to be foolish—you have thought better of it, haven't you?"

"I will do anything that you wish," she replied.

"There now, that's more like my own Katey than you have been as yet! I knew you would hear reason. Believe me, child, it is better for you to go

back, even if it is rather unpleasant, and even if it is only for a little time. You do what I want now, Katey, and I will promise you that the first leave I get I will spend in Danford. Poor little girl! I am afraid I was a bit rough on you, but, believe me, if I didn't care so much—if I thought less of you, I should have welcomed you much more warmly. If it had been any other woman I know, married or single, I should not have scolded her for coming here, Katey. But when I realise that it was you who had put your innocent hand into the open fire, I can't tell you what I felt like—beside myself, almost."

"You are quite right," said the girl, leaning her head upon her hand, and looking thoughtfully into the fire, "I was utterly wrong to come to you. It was a crazy, mad thing to do, and I am very sorry I did it, but it has taught me a lesson; once I get out of this I shall never want such a lesson again."

They were interrupted then by the appearance of Tinker, who appeared with a tablecloth and the necessary adjuncts thereto, and laid the simple table for their dinner.

"They are rather afraid, sir, that dinner won't be anything too good, but they've done their best, sir, and the soup will be up in two minutes."

"Very good. All right, Tinker. It is very late and we must take what we can get. You ought to have given Miss Jervis some dinner an hour ago."

At this, the first intimation of her supposed identity, Katey looked up with a start, and a vivid, guilty blush overspread her pale and weary face.

"Am I supposed to be your sister?" she asked, when the door had closed behind the man.

"Yes, I thought it was the best thing to say. One must keep up appearances even to one's own servant."

"I wonder if he believes you?" she asked.

"My dear child, that is immaterial—that is perfectly immaterial. He probably doesn't know who

you are. If he does, he will take his cue from me and hold his tongue."

"How do you know?"

"Oh, one's servant doesn't find it to his interest to talk much about one's affairs. He understands—at least, if he knows you, he understands that I wish nothing to be said."

Almost immediately Tinker came back bringing two plates and the soup in two little covered bowls. He emptied them out into the plates and set the little dish of fried toast in front of Katey.

"Open the champagne, Tinker," said Jervis.

"Yes, sir," said Tinker.

The strong clear soup and good champagne served to smooth down Jervis's ruffled feelings as probably nothing else on earth would have had power to do. As soon as they were alone again, he re-filled his glass and held it for a moment towards her—

"Here's to a clear way out of the scrape, my child," he said, more kindly than he had as yet spoken. Without a word Katey lifted hers and drained it to the bottom. Notwithstanding the late hour, the dinner was really excellent, and Katey, in spite of the deep despair and disappointment that was in her heart, being young and terribly hungry, made really a very good meal. Under the influence of the dinner and the champagne all the sharp edges of Jervis's annoyance seemed to wear off, and as they sat and talked he became more like the old Phil, whose clear help and direction she had sought. The new, stern, and strange Jervis, who had wrought such havoc in the girl's tender and hungry heart during the past hour, had vanished, and he held her hand and kissed her occasionally—nay, if the truth be told, kissed her very often—quite as he had been used to do in the course of their stolen meetings at Danford—and Katey submitted. It cannot be said that she did more than submit. In no sense did the old Katey

come back again, the Katey who had regarded him with adoring eyes, the Katey who had hung upon his every word much as she might have done if pearls and diamonds had fallen from his lips instead of mere cheap human speech, the Katey who would have laid her neck down under his foot and let him tread upon it, if by so doing she would have given him pleasure. No, that Katey never came back again. She sat with a passive hand in his, with a passive waist encircled by his arm, with a passive cheek and lifeless mouth, which he might kiss as often as he chose; but there was no soul, no life in the girl, no answering pleasure in her eyes as he talked of the times they would have together yet, as he hinted in that vague, loose fashion of his, which had once been so enthralling to her, that by-and-by they would be together for always, that they would never part any more on this side of the grave. It all fell upon dead ears, and when at last he wrenched himself away, telling her that she must lock the door and try to go to sleep, that she must, for her own sake, get as much rest as she possibly could, it was still the new, numb, irresponsible Katey who had been born of the fire of his great anger and indignation.

He was still standing saying farewell when someone knocked at the door. Jervis went to it, and found Tinker standing without. Jervis went out to him, closing the door behind him.

"I've put you a fire in Mr. Adams's room, sir; he is gone away for the night, and his man says you will find it very comfortable."

"Oh, that's all right, Tinker! That's all right! I will turn in there presently. You might take me a whisky and soda up there, will you? And something to smoke. By-the-bye, you had better wake me about half-past six, and wake Miss Jervis at the same time."

"Very good, sir."

"And get breakfast in my rooms by seven sharp, will you?"

"I will, sir."

"I think that's all."

"Very good, sir."

He turned back into the room again. "I have told my fellow to get breakfast at seven sharp, and to call you half-an-hour before then. You will be up, won't you?"

"Oh, yes, I shall be up."

"You think you will be able to make yourself comfortable till then?"

"I think so; but couldn't I go by an earlier train, Phil?"

"Yes, there is an earlier train, but it's deucedly uncomfortable work getting up in the middle of the night, and I should have ever so much trouble to get a cab; as it is, I have already ordered it."

"What time is there a train?"

"Oh, there's one about six o'clock, but you will find the eight o'clock quite time enough for you. By-the-bye, I shouldn't tell Flo Marston a word of anything that's happened. Tell her you got into the wrong train, or anything you like, but don't tell her anything about this."

"No, I won't," said Katey.

"Well, then, I suppose I had better say good-night."

"Good-night!" she returned.

"And you know," he went on, still holding her hand, "you will forget all this by and by, and you will be grateful to me, Katey, I am sure you will."

"Yes, I am sure of it," she replied mechanically.

At last he went clattering out, waiting to hear her turn the key in the lock behind him. "Good-night," he said, through the closed door.

"Good-night!" came back the girl's reply in faint accents.

At last she was left quite alone—alone in the rooms of the man she loved. They really were rooms, for opening from the principal apartment, which was furnished as a sitting-room, was a tiny sort of dressing-room, which served its owner for a sleeping place. Once fairly alone, Katey Vincent sat down to think—to think that she was here in her heart's Paradise, and that she was more wretched than she had ever been in all her life before; to think that she had cast all her treasury at the feet of a man who had spurned it, trodden it under foot, trampled it with hard cruel merciless feet into the very dust of the earth; to realise that she had been foolish, silly, reckless, even mad, but yet that he had had no pity for her weakness, no mercy for her frailties, that he had set no value by her tenderness. Oh! it was a bitter, bitter hour that had come upon her! Instead of the sunshine of his protective love, she had found only the hard, everyday, practical common-sense of a man who minded what people said. It had never occurred to Katey before that Phil, her hero, her king among men, could stop to consider for a moment the thoughts and opinions of others. Yet it had been his first thought on seeing her! "What are you doing here? What will people say?" and all through the evening the same thing had recurred, this singular consideration for what mere outside people would think and say! It is always so with women who overstep certain bounds. As a rule, they prefer that the whole world should know what they have done. They seem to glory in doing something which is generally considered wrong or indiscreet. With men, it is seldom so,—perhaps because they are always more or less living on the edge of a volcano of wrong-doing. With women, poor souls, it is a new experience; with men it is otherwise.

But there was no glory about poor Katey that night, no revelling in her own wrong-doing, because

the most momentous and the most reckless step of her whole life had been an utter failure. Phil would have none of her; he had made that but too plain! She had cast down a bombshell with a lighted fuse which, in bursting, would blow her past life into the fragments of utter destruction! But the fuse had smouldered out, and the bombshell lay there still—a thing without life, a thing without power! Her great plan for emancipating herself from the hateful ban of taunts and dependence had fizzed out into nothingness!

CHAPTER V.

WAITING.

“An old tale will have matter to rehearse
Though credit be asleep and not an open ear.”
THE WINTER’S TALE.

WHEN Phil Jervis finally heard the key turn in the lock he gave a sigh of relief, as if a very knotty and weighty question had definitely arranged itself into comfortable easy lines. He went first straight to the quarters of the subaltern in which he meant to pass the night. There was a good fire blazing in the grate, and the room looked comfortable and inviting enough. He sat down in the easiest chair that it contained and filled his pipe, intending to have a good think over the circumstances of this extraordinary and eventful evening.

But if the truth be told, Phil Jervis was utterly and thoroughly uncomfortable. He felt rather as if he had wounded a child. He had an uncomfortable sort of sensation that he had failed one who had trusted him utterly, and a lingering suspicion that

he had been unnecessarily severe and stern with his unlooked for and unwelcome visitor. He thought he had never seen her look so pretty as she had done that evening, and yet, on the whole, he was glad that he had been firm, that he had been resolute. Jervis had no fancy for scandals. Amid the many temptations of his life as a soldier he had steered wonderfully clear of any breath of calumny, and if he married Katey eventually—which was more than probable, because he was really exceedingly fond of her—he had no intention of taking unto himself a wife against whose fair name there would be even a breath of suspicion. So that he felt doubly satisfied to think that he had so cleverly managed a matter so exceedingly awkward and which, under some circumstances, might have generated into something unpleasant—even dangerous.

He looked at his watch, it was past twelve o'clock, under ordinary circumstances late enough to go to bed and to fall into a sound, dreamless sleep, which should be broken only by the arrival of Tinker with his cup of tea; but Jervis did not feel like sleeping just then. Perhaps the fact that he was not in his own quarters might have had something to do with it; possibly, also, that he could hear the hilarious voices of some of his brother officers further along the corridor was another reason for banishing sleep from his eyes.

"Hang it! It's no use going to bed yet," he muttered to himself, as he upheaved himself from the deep chair. "I'll go and see what the other fellows are after."

Now nobody in the regiment knew that he was as yet returned from his leave, and when he showed himself in the room wherein some eight or ten of the junior officers were assembled, his appearance was the signal for a perfect volley of chaff and cross-questioning.

"Hullo, Jervis, old boy, is that you? Well, what have you been up to? I thought you were in London fogs!"

"So I was. I have just come back," Jervis answered.

"Oh, what time did you come?"

"I came at nine o'clock."

"Oh! We hear you had a visitor."

At this Jervis promptly said "D——" to his own inner consciousness, but outwardly he answered the remark without expressing either annoyance or embarrassment at it. "Yes, that was the reason I have not shown myself before. The fact is my sister wanted to see me on important business, and instead of wiring to me, she came here. Beastly thing a chap having a sister invading his quarters at all sorts of inconvenient hours! However, I read her such a lecture that I don't think she will venture here any more!"

"Did you really, now?" said Ames, in a serious tone. "What did she say to that?"

Jervis laughed a little. "Oh, well, she didn't like it, of course, but she had to put up with it. Somehow or another, one's people are always doing these inconvenient and awkward things! Here have I had to turn out of my room to accommodate her, and to go and borrow young Adams's! I couldn't take her to one of those hotels in the town at this time of night—it would look so fishy."

"Exactly, that is quite true," said Ames, in his most serious tones. "And how long is the young lady going to stay?"

"Oh, only till first train in the morning. I would have seen her back to-night if I could have got a train."

He flattered himself that he had carried off the situation in a really diplomatic and perfectly natural manner. After he had ceased speaking there was a moment's silence. Then Ames looked up and again

asked a question. "By the bye, old chap, I say, when did you start having a sister of your own?"

"Oh, D——!" returned Jervis, promptly.

"Yes, exactly, I knew you would say that; but, as a matter of curiosity, when *did* you start having a sister of your own?"

"Well, if you *must* know," said Jervis, feeling that it was useless to carry on the "sister" theory any longer, "I started to-night."

"I thought so!" said the other with a yell of laughter.

"Of course, you all know that story about the chap at Oxford who had a sister," remarked Stonor, at that moment from behind a cloud of tobacco smoke.

"No!"

"Well. I'm afraid it is rather a chestnut; but such as it is you are welcome to it. There was a young fellow at Oxford whose sister—his real sister, you know—went to see him in his rooms, went to breakfast, you know, and whilst they were at breakfast his scout came up and said that there was an old clergyman downstairs who had had these rooms when he was a youngster at college. He hadn't been to Oxford for forty years, and he would take it as a very great favour if he might look at them again. The young fellow said 'Oh, hang the old fellow. What does he want to see his rooms for? I wonder what he will think of you, Kitty.' 'Oh,' said Kitty, 'It's all right! I will go into your bedroom, he won't want to go into there.' So Kitty hooked it into her brother's bedroom and the scout showed the old chap up. He was a very respectable old parson, you know—white hair, benign voice, blue eyes—you know the type—dear old chap, and full of gratitude that the favour he had asked had been granted. 'Dear me, dear me,' said he, rubbing his hands as he looked around, 'it quite takes me back to the time when I was a boy—ah, the same old room. Dear me, sir. I

have not been to Oxford for forty years, but nothing is altered. Just the same old room, the same old paper on the walls, the same old view from the windows! Dear me, dear me! And if my memory serves me, that door led to my bedroom,' and before the owner of the rooms could stop him the old boy had thrown the door open and walked into the bedroom. To his relief there was nothing of his sister to be seen, but a bulginess of one of the window curtains gave him a hint of where she had disappeared to. He followed the old parson round, devoutly hoping that he would not notice her whereabouts. 'Oh, dear, dear,' said the old boy, 'same old bedroom. Dear me, the same window—same old view—' and then he put his hand on the curtain and disclosed the girl standing there, blushing and covered with confusion. 'Oh,' said he, 'the same old game!' 'Not at all, sir, not at all, sir!' cried the young chap, all in a hurry. 'The fact is my sister was having breakfast with me when your message was brought to me, and she slipped in here to get out of the road. My sister, sir.' 'Ah, yes, yes,' said the old parson, 'of course, to be sure—to be sure,' and he shook hands with the two and departed downstairs, muttering to himself—'Ah, dear, dear, nothing is altered—even the same old lie!'"

"Oh, well, you see she *was* his sister," said Ames quizzically.

"Yes, she was, but it applies all the same," returned Stonor, puffing away at his pipe again.

"Well, now look here, you fellows," said Jervis, "I know what I tell you is safe enough. I said it was my sister in there because practically she is my sister, and, at all events, I wish her to be treated as my sister. I didn't expect a visitor to-night—I didn't expect this visitor at all, and I don't want to hear any more about it."

"My dear chap," said Stonor, "if we had known

it was a serious matter with you we would not have said a word about it."

"Well, it is a serious matter with me," said Phil, in his gravest voice, "and so, if you don't mind changing the subject, I shall be infinitely obliged to you."

Under some circumstances, a man in the position in which Jervis found himself that night, might as well ask eight or ten of his brother officers to go and hang themselves as to change the subject unless it suited their fancy, but something in his tone and something in his face told them that he was deadly in earnest, and, therefore, instead of turning him like St. Lawrence on his gridiron, they, with common consent, did as he asked them.

"Let us go and draw young Marjoribanks," said Ames, who was the leading spirit that evening—usually Jervis was. They all jumped up with an alacrity which showed how glad of a change of thought they were, and marched off to the other end of the corridor, all ready and more than willing to put into practice a few of those ingenious forms of torture which are the invariable fate of all young men when they first enter upon the honourable profession of arms.

First they knocked rather loudly at his door, and said that the Colonel had just had a message from the Horse Guards to say that the Queen would be passing through Blankhampton Station on her way to London at half-past three, and that the entire regiment had orders to turn out in full dress to provide a suitable Guard of Honour for her, as she would alight to take supper at the Station Hotel. But young Marjoribanks had been six weeks in the White Horse, and he had been turned out to form so many Guards of Honour during that short space of time, that it no longer amounted to anything more authoritative than a cry of "Wolf! Wolf!" therefore he resolutely refused to budge an inch.

"It is no good," said one to another. "The chap's getting up to it all. He's as sharp as a needle and as wary as a ferret. Let's sentry-box him."

But sentry-boxing was no use either. Young Marjoribanks steadily refused to be drawn, and his door happened to be one which had been made specially strong by a previous occupant of the rooms, so that he knew that he was perfectly safe from an actual intrusion unless he chose to admit the roysterers of his own accord.

"Let us blow the door in," suggested Ames.

"No, no," cried Jervis, thinking of the girl who was probably frightened out of her senses at the other end of the long passage. "Don't do that, because gunpowder makes a beastly row and a beastly smell. Don't do that, you fellows."

Foiled in their attempts to draw young Marjoribanks, they went on to the quarters of one Geoffrey Balmayne, who was next in seniority to Marjoribanks. In his rooms for an hour or so they made fine havoc, turning everything topsy-turvy, and making one vast heap in the very middle of his sitting-room of his furniture and belongings, adding, as a crowning point, the lad himself dressed in nothing, sitting in his bath. Then, having fairly spoiled his night's rest, they concluded that they would go to bed themselves, and dropped off one by one, until Jervis finally found himself sitting once more in young Adams's big arm-chair, with the fire burnt down to the lowest bar in the ugly grate. "I wonder if she has been frightened to-night," his thoughts ran. "If she has, it might help to teach her a lesson, and yet—poor little soul—I was rough on her. But what could I do? If I had pitied her and made much of her at first, it would have been all up with us both. After all, I did the right thing. I suppose I shall find it hard to make her believe it, but it really was the kindest thing, and I never meant to act anything but square by Katey—

never. I shall have to marry her after this, of course, there's no reasonable way out of it—hang it. I don't know that I want to find a way out of it. How pretty she looked to-night. So soft and fresh and innocent. And how angry she was about that lout, John Sylvester, wanting to marry her. I wonder if I shall get her off in the morning without anyone seeing her. Well—I am getting tired. I must get into bed. I wonder if she is very frightened, poor little soul."

So Phil Jervis slowly undressed, got into bed, and in two minutes was sleeping the sleep of a man who had assured himself that he had done even more than his duty.

CHAPTER VI.

A LITTLE WORLD.

"The Gods are above; time must friend or end."

TROILUS AND CRESSIDA.

PHIL JERVIS never moved or was in any way conscious of his surroundings until the gruff voice of Tinker aroused him at the appointed time. His answer to the information that it was half-past six o'clock was to the effect that he was not Orderly Officer for that day, to which the servant replied that his orders had been to arouse him at that hour and that the cab was ordered for half-past seven. At this point Jervis became aware that he was not in his own room or in his own cot. "Oh, by the bye," he asked, raising himself on his elbow, "where am I? Why, this is Mr. Adams's room! Oh, of course, yes, I remember. By the bye, have you been to Miss Jervis?"

"The young lady hev gone, sir," was Tinker's unexpected reply.

"What?" thundered Phil, wide awake by this time. "Gone! Gone where?"

"That's more than I can tell you, sir. I went to the door just now with a cup of tea, and I couldn't get any answer, and as it was open, I went in, thinking I would knock at the inner room door, but that was open, and I saw the bed hadn't been slept in, sir."

"The bed not been slept in!"

"I should say not, sir, unless the young lady made it before she went."

"Do you mean to say that she is not there?"

"She was not in your rooms, sir, when I came out of them," was Tinker's stolid reply.

"Good heavens! Here—all right! I will come in a minute."

He was indeed scarcely more than a minute hustling a few clothes on, and when he dashed into his own rooms, it was as Tinker had said—Katey had gone! There was no sign or trace of her, not a word, not a letter, not a scrap of paper, not so much as a trace of her presence. The bed had evidently not been used, everything was exactly as he had left it with the exception that in place of a roaring fire there were only a few burnt cinders in the cold grate.

In his consternation Phil Jervis sat down and wondered what on earth he would do next. He concluded that she had hurried off and caught the earlier train so that she might get to her friend's house a couple of hours earlier than if she had waited for the one at eight o'clock. Well, perhaps it was better so; at all events, she had got out of barracks safely, and he had not been obliged to identify himself with her in any way. As she had come, so she had gone, and Jervis set about dressing himself with the feeling that although he had given her no warm welcome, yet

that the lesson would prove a very salutary one, and dear little innocent unsuspecting thing as she was, she would think twice before she acted on an impulse again and put her hand into the lion's mouth. Still, he could not help being in a sense uneasy about her. His first impulse was to telegraph at once to her friend, Flo Marston, at Appleton, to know whether she had arrived there, or rather, that he might be informed of her safe arrival when she reached her destination; but, on second thoughts, he came to the conclusion that the less he mixed himself up with the affair the better, as it was more than likely Katey would not even mention him to her friend, let alone that she had passed the night at Blankhampton.

"After all, there's a good deal in 'Least said soonest mended,'" his thoughts ran, "and until Katey writes to me herself, I had better not lift a finger. Goodness knows, I don't want to give her away, or anything of that kind!" So he consoled himself as well as he could, and set about his daily business as much as possible as if the exceedingly unpleasant occurrences of the previous evening had never happened.

He found himself the subject of a little quiet chaff when he appeared in the mess room.

"Hollo, Phil!" remarked Ames, in an undertone, "seen your sister off?"

"My sister went off at six o'clock this morning, thank you," was Phil's reply.

"Wish my sisters would come to see me," Ames remarked feelingly. "But they never do—never seem to think of it!"

"No, I dare say not," said Phil, deliberately; "I wouldn't, if I were your sister."

"No, my dear chap, and probably she would not if she was yours."

To which Phil Jervis, however, turned a deaf ear, pretending that he had not caught the import of his comrade's words. Ames was, however, not the only

one to remind him that he had had a visitor the previous evening; but still, in a barrack, such incidents are soon forgotten, and after a few hours Jervis's brother officers apparently thought no more about it.

During the whole day Phil was in more or less of a fever. He thought that at least Katey would send him a wire or a line on arriving at Appleton and finding that her absence had not been noticed. But as the hours of the morning passed over, and he knew that she must have reached Appleton safely, no such message was brought to him. He got through his morning's work in very much the usual way, and lingered over lunch, because he wanted to put on the time, but although he dawdled about until nearly four o'clock no orange-coloured envelope came to bring him the tidings of Katey's safety.

"I suppose she is too much flurried, or perhaps angry with me, to have sent a message," he said to himself. "Still she must have known I should be anxious, particularly after taking French leave in that ungracious fashion. I shall go out."

He dressed himself with his usual care, and having foregathered with Ames, who had nothing particular to do, drove out to Ingleby and several other large houses in the neighbourhood of the town.

They found her ladyship of Ingleby at home. I have said before in my chronicles of Blankhampton that Lady Vivian of Ingleby was one of the most important hostesses in the county. She was still as addicted to match-making as she had ever been, and as innocent of the fact that she had helped on marriages at every feasible opportunity, as she had ever been at any point in her career. She received the two dragoons with her usual bland and charming manner. In truth, she was very glad to see them, because Ingleby was a great hunting house, and Sir Thomas and all the men visitors had been absent since early morning.

"And how is it that you are not hunting?" she asked, as they settled themselves down for a chat.

"Well, the fact is, Lady Vivian," Ames replied, "I was not able to hunt to-day. I was out yesterday, but the horse I was to ride to-day is not very fit, and we poor soldiers, you know, have not got the Ingleby stables behind us."

"No, no, I see."

"And I," said Jervis, "didn't feel like hunting. The fact is I have been waiting all day for a telegram which, by the bye, has not come."

From this they slipped into a friendly little chat, and Lady Vivian told them who she had staying in the house, and finally asked them to come out to dinner the following evening, an invitation which they accepted with alacrity.

"But come into the hall now," she said, glancing at the clock. "It is just time for tea. The ladies are sure to be there."

The hall was, however, in possession of no more important visitors than a couple of huge dogs, but tea was just being arranged, and presently one after another of the ladies came in. There were two Miss Atkinsons—Oh, well, Atkinson with a hyphen and another name in front of it—very smart, sleek-looking damsels, thoroughly up to date in all that was going on in London, and hopelessly out of it in everything appertaining to a country life. These two paired off with the two dragoons as naturally as—well, as bread and butter go together.

"Do you live in Blankhampton all the year round?" asked one of them of Jervis.

"Yes, when I am not on leave and as long as I am quartered here."

"Oh, yes. How awfully bored you must get," she said, in an undertone, "my sister and I have been here for three days—we came for a fortnight—and I think she will be dead when we get back to London."

"Oh, no, this is one of the nicest houses in the county."

"Oh, the house is nice enough, and Lady Vivian is too charming for words—kindness itself—and there are awfully nice men staying in the house; but then, they hunt all day long, and they come home too tired to want to do anything, and all day long Jack and I wander in and out, out and in, killing time. It is dreadful!"

"Is Jack your——?"

"Yes, Jack is my sister. We are always called Jack and Jill," she replied. "Of course, you know, we have not known Lady Vivian very long. She is a dear—I never met such a dear, but it is always so stately, don't you know, and so unlike what we are used to."

"And you live in London?"

"Yes, we live in Queen's Gate. My mother is Miss Neville, the novelist."

"You don't say so?" he ejaculated.

Miss Atkinson laughed outright. "Oh, don't I look as if I might have a mother who could write books?" she asked.

"I don't say that, or wish to imply as much," said he politely, "but Miss Neville's name has been known to me ever since I was a boy, and, of course, it is very interesting to meet her daughters."

"Oh, yes, yes, people do say that. Of course, we think our mother is very clever—awfully clever—in fact, we don't think anybody's books equal to hers, but I always find everybody says the same thing—'Oh, are you Miss Neville's daughters?' as if there was any reason why Miss Neville should not have two daughters."

"Yes, but people never think of that; one only thinks of one's own individual surprise," said he, getting up to fetch the muffin plate. "Have some more muffin, Miss Atkinson?"

"Oh, thank you, yes, yes—'Have some more muffin, Miss Neville?' you should have said—at least that is what most new friends say. Thank you, yes. But don't call us Neville, we don't like it. It is our mother's name, it belongs to her. My name is Neville, but it is my Christian name. I am called Neville Prothero-Atkinson, and we like to be called by our own name."

"You like to be called Prothero-Atkinson or Atkinson?"

"Oh, well, of course, we really have a double name—it isn't put on; but we always call ourselves Atkinson, and all our friends call us Atkinson, so you can do the same."

"Thank you very much," said he, as he sat down again. "And then I suppose you have a very good time in town?"

"Yes, we go out a great deal. Of course, you know, this sort of society is very dull after London. Heavy, isn't it?"

"I don't know! I can't say I find society in general heavy."

"No? Well, perhaps you wouldn't, but when you know all the actors and all the artists and all the novelists and everybody interesting—the persons that have broken away from their Church—and all the big doctors—all interesting people, don't you know, it makes you feel as if you had got among a lot of vegetables. I am sure dear old Sir Thomas is quite too lovely for words, and he and Lady Vivian are most devoted to each other—really, it is quite pretty to see them, quite idyllic and all that; but really he is so prosy, he is so dull, so deaf too. Now, for instance, the first night at dinner I sat next to him, and I asked him if he admired Ellen Terry. What do you think he said?"

"I don't know," answered Jervis, with a laugh.

"Well, he turned round and he said, 'My dear, we

had the best run that I remember for years upon years!' For a minute or two I really didn't know what he was talking about. I said that Ellen Terry had had a good run, but he went on to explain something about digging out, and an old dog-fog that had eaten all the eggs or something. I was bored to death," she continued, "and yet I had to grin and nod and pretend I understood all about it! Oh, I call this sort of society very tiresome. And, you know, all the local young ladies, they are just as bad as if they were old squires. They yarn on about brushes and pads, and runs and spins, and all the rest of it, and when they are all in their bedrooms brushing their hair out they talk far more about safety-habits, skirts, and hairpins warranted not to come out, than they do about either their love affairs or their ball dresses. Oh, dear, I am glad and thankful that I don't live in the country altogether!"

"I am sure you are, but then, you see, you mustn't forget this, that if they came to town and listened to you and your sister chattering on about your everyday life, they would not understand it, either."

"I suppose not, but still they might get to know—anybody who lives in London may get to know—but one might live here for a century and yet be out of it, unless one took to hunting and that sort of thing."

"You don't ride?" asked Jervis, wondering whether there would be a telegram for him when he got back to the barracks.

"Oh, I ride in the park, yes, but, of course, it is different to riding across country. I don't believe I should ever do that. I can't see that it is worth it. I am sure these girls' complexions really are terrible!"

"And yet," said Jervis, thinking of Katey, "there are many charming young ladies in the country who never hunted in their lives, and who never wished to do so."

"Poor things! Neither fish, fowl, nor good red herring!" remarked Miss Atkinson frivolously. "That sort of thing would not suit me. If I am in town, I am of town, and if I have to live in the country I should take care to make myself of the country as soon as possible. By the bye, were you quartered at Danford before you were here?"

"Yes, I was. We were there for about eighteen months."

"Oh, yes, what a nice place it is! Did you like it?"

"Yes, I like it very much."

"Better than Blankhampton."

"Oh, well, I don't know—quite as well as Blankhampton," he replied.

"Oh, I see. Jill and I once stayed there nearly a month. That was about two years ago. We had some friends who lived at the Croft."

"Not the Williamsons?"

"No, not the Williamsons, but with some friends of ours to whom the Williamsons lent their house for the summer. We spent a month down there during their tenancy."

"Oh, really. I know the Croft very well."

"Pretty place, isn't it?"

"Very pretty," said he, his thoughts flying back to the time when he had played tennis with Katey and the young Williamsons.

"There were some rather nice people round about," said Miss Atkinson, carelessly.

"Oh, very nice. The people were very nice at Danford."

"So I thought. By the bye, did you know a Miss Vincent when you were there?"

Jervis's heart gave a great leap, but he answered with admirably preserved calmness. "Oh, yes, I know Miss Vincent. I used to meet her at the Croft among other places."

"I see. Did you know her very well?"

"Oh, yes; as one knows young ladies one plays tennis with."

"Well, I saw her yesterday."

Jervis looked straight at her. "You saw Miss Vincent!"

"Yes."

"Where?"

"In Blankhampton."

"Impossible!"

"Yes, I did."

"Are you sure?"

"Quite sure."

"You saw her yourself?"

"Yes."

"You are sure."

"I am certain. I am as sure as I am that I am alive, and that I am talking to you at this moment. I never forget a face. I knew her in a minute."

"Where was it?"

"Well, we had been to a party in the town with Lady Vivian, and she had the omnibus out and went round to the station to meet the London train, to meet some men, and one of the men who came asked her if she would mind waiting whilst he sent off a telegram, and, of course, Lady Vivian said 'Not the least in the world,' so we waited in the carriage for him, and I sat at the door watching the people come out of the station. I saw Katey Vincent as plainly as I can see you. She had a bundle in a strap in her hand, and she got into a cab close to the carriage."

"And there was nobody to meet her?" Jervis asked.

"No. That was what I thought so odd. I should have liked to have got out and spoken to her. I wondered whether, as you had been quartered at Danford, you might chance to know with whom she was staying."

For a moment the room seemed to go round and round and to rock up and down. Then Jervis pulled himself together and managed to reply. "Do you know," he said, "I think that you must be quite mistaken. It was towards evening, and appearances are sometimes very deceptive, and I am quite sure that Miss Vincent told me when we were ordered to Blankhampton that she didn't know a soul here, and has never been in this county in her life. I really think that you must have been mistaken altogether."

CHAPTER VII.

SUSPENSE

"Trouble being gone, comfort should remain."
MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING.

MISS ATKINSON, however, held resolutely to her point. "Oh, I am quite sure it was Katey Vincent," she said, in a decided voice, "because, you know, I knew her quite well. I saw a good deal of her whilst I was staying at the Croft, and I couldn't mistake her. And, besides that, she had the full light from that glaring electric lamp at the station entrance right on her face."

"Did she recognise you?" Jervis asked.

"Oh, no. You see, I was quite in the shadow of the carriage. I wasn't leaning out or anything, but the carriage was backed up right against the kerb, end on, and I saw her as clearly as I see you."

She did not add that she had actually heard the cabman repeat the address which Katey had given him in an undertone—"Yes, miss," were the words

that had fallen upon her startled ears, "Cavalry Barracks? Certainly, miss."

"Well, of course, I don't know," said he carelessly, "she might have a dozen friends in Blankhampton by this time, or she might have been going to stay with somebody in the regiment—one of the married ladies—but I have not heard of it, that's all."

"Are there any married ladies in barracks?"

"One or two, but I think I should have heard of it if Miss Vincent, or any other lady I knew, had been staying with them."

"Ah, well, it is very queer," said Miss Atkinson, in a tone which plainly showed that she had not been influenced in the least by their conversation, and that she still believed that Katey Vincent had arrived at Blankhampton the previous evening and had chartered a cab and ordered it to be driven to the Cavalry Barracks. Jervis, however, turned the subject aside with great skill, and the young lady was quite impressed with the belief that he and Katey Vincent had not been more to each other than mere acquaintances. But, truth to tell, he felt a fresh renewal of his anger against Katey for having been so foolish as to come, and, while he continued talking on other matters, he sent up many expressions of thanksgiving to that indefinite power which we call Providence for having thus safely delivered him from the annoyance and irritation of a big scandal. As he talked and handed tea and muffins, and liberally helped himself to the same, there kept ringing through his brain a series of ejaculatory sentences. "Heaven be thanked she went!" "Thank God she's safely out of town!" and such-like scrappy pæans of self-congratulation, anything but complimentary to poor Katey. So anxious was he not to appear in any way interested in her movements that he entered upon a very promising flirtation with the young lady who rejoiced in the *petit nom* of "Jill," which, in view of the dinner

of the following evening, seemed to Lady Vivian—good kind soul, always on the look-out for affairs of the kind as she was—to be a very promising episode with which to keep up the reputation of Ingleby as a house which rejoiced in the credit of having brought about more marriages than any other mansion in the three kingdoms.

The two dragoons called elsewhere before they went back into the town; then they looked in at the club to see the latest papers, and hear the latest gossip, and finally, having sent their dog-cart home from the club in charge of the groom, they strolled back to barracks in easy time to dress for mess. There was no telegram from Katey, no letter, no message, not a word—he had refused the sanctuary she craved, the sanctuary which she believed had been promised to her, and she had quietly, resolutely, and silently taken herself out of the way—out of his life—not even giving him the trouble of escorting her to the railway station.

One of his brother officers dropped into his rooms on his way down to mess, and, instead of opening the door, and asking permission to enter after he had done so, he gave a vigorous thump with his knuckles, and waited until Jervis's voice bade him enter before he did so. This man had gone in on some small errand, the veriest trifling excuse that he could think of at the last moment. Having obtained what he wanted, he sat down in the big chair, and said that they might as well go down together, and on Jervis's replying that he would be ready in a minute or two, the young man leaned back in the chair and awaited his pleasure. The real object of his visit he soon attained, and when they went down to the mess-rooms together, he was satisfied that there was not a trace of a lady's presence in his comrade's rooms. Evidently Jervis's "sister" had been bundled off as unceremoniously as if she really did stand in that relation to him.

There was yet another post in the evening, but it brought no letter for Jervis, nor did one come the following day, although he remained at home when he would otherwise have been hunting, on purpose that he might receive it at the moment it arrived, but when the post-corporal rode into barracks at his usual time in the middle of the morning, there was no letter from Katey Vincent. Others he had, including a quite tender one from Mrs. Paget, throwing out a tender and delicate suggestion about a few days' leave, which brought an ugly word to Jervis's lips, such as would have made Mrs. Paget shrivel if she could but have heard him. Nor was Mrs. Paget's the only letter addressed in a feminine hand; but they were all as Dead Sea fruit to the young man who was so uneasy and so disturbed in his mind. With every hour there came a growing conviction that he had been unnecessarily hard and brutal towards her, and although the remembrance of the near shave that the girl had run of being recognised by a friend in the open street told him that, if he had been so, it had been for Katey's own good, yet he longed for the assurance of her acceptance of the wisdom of this advice. He felt that she had taken him at an unfair advantage, that whatever he might have said and done was justified by the imprudence of her actions and the natural annoyance which he had felt; yet the dictates of his own conscience were not sufficient for him—he wanted to be *assured* that Katey herself bore him no malice, that Katey, in her calm moments, had come to understand that practically it had been impossible for him to act other than he had done.

A certain something lurking down in the bottom of that mysterious apartment which we call the heart told him that if he received a letter of penitence from the little sinner, he would at once go off to Danford and arrange to marry her as soon as possible. Of

course, caring for her as he did, and having made her care for him, he could not let a mere question of prudence stand in the way of her entire happiness, or of his own. He could not and would not leave her to be pestered with the loathsome attentions of her cousin, John Sylvester, whom she cordially hated, and who, unfortunately, was very much in love with her. Of course, it was unfortunate that a man under whose roof she lived should make her life a burden to her, and equally, of course, only an utter cad would continue to press his attentions upon a girl who had once refused them, a girl who was in a sense dependent upon him, thus rendering the roof which should have been her natural shelter merely a loathsome prison. Of course, he could not abandon little Katey to that, and as a natural and very laudable prudence was the only obstacle in the way of the marriage, he had easily made up his mind that it would eventually come about, and with no feeling whatever of personal sacrifice in the matter.

But Katey made no sign. Katey sent no word. For all the intelligence and information that postman or telegraph boy brought to him, Katey might have passed out of his rooms into utter oblivion! Not one word, good, bad, or indifferent, came to assure him of her welfare, or to inform him of her whereabouts. Once or twice he was on the point of writing to Flo Marston at Appleton to ask news of her, but some instinct told him that the less he mixed himself up with anyone at Danford just then the better for him. "Let sleeping dogs lie," was the proverb which came into his mind a great many times during the week. Yes, during that week, for the days had succeeded one another until a whole week had gone by since the day of his return from London, since the horrid night when he had met Katey's eager glances of love with cold anger, since he had frozen the tender words upon her lips, and be-

haved, though from the kindest motives in the world, like a perfect brute to her. Evidently, she was still very angry with him, and Phil Jervis could not bear to think that there was just a possibility that her anger would not die away, and that she would always remain angry with him, that she would never forget how he had received her, that she would never understand that he had all the time had her interests at heart rather than his own. Between ourselves, I don't know that this was so; but when one has done something disagreeable, chilling, snubbing, and unkind to those we really value most in all the world, it is the easiest and most natural thing possible to tell one's self—aye, and to make one's self believe it, too—that although the manner was hard, the motive had been excellent. He alternated between the various phases of uneasiness, self-assurance, wonder, doubt, and a dozen other different variations of thought; yet all the time, it must be owned, Phil Jervis was desperately uneasy and, at bottom, desperately unhappy. At times, the uncertainty was too painful to bear. He felt that he simply must—reason or none, prudent or imprudent—rush off to Danford to find out what had become of Katey, or rather, what had become of Katey's old love for him.

Still, leave was exceedingly difficult to get just then, because about half the officers were gone on their long leave, and Phil had arranged to take his with the second batch from about the first week in the year, so that it was next door to impossible to get even a couple of days' leave just at this time. He did, however, eventually manage to get leave for a single night, and with a most modest supply of luggage he went off to Danford, arrived at the hotel at which he had stayed before quite late in the evening; but, having got there, he scarcely knew what to do next. He did not know whether to go and call upon Katey because he was not sure that she would

even receive him, but the following morning, after much cogitation, he walked up the road and reconnoitred the outside of Sylvester's house.

As a rule, she was accustomed to sit just within a window which looked upon the long, suburban, and almost country road in which the house was situated, and in the old days, when he had been quartered in the barracks on the other side of the town, he had been used to walk up the road and, going straight along past the hedge, turn to the left and wait at a little gate, through which in five minutes or so Katey was sure to come, having seen him come along the road and pass the window. He thought it probable that she was still sitting there; but no, there was not the slightest sign of her red-bronze head to be seen. He stayed an hour or two on the road that morning, spending a good part of it sitting on a gate smoking a pipe and keeping an eye upon the Croft gates; but no Katey came between them. He never caught so much as a glimpse of her.

He went back to the hotel and lunched, then went into the principal street and took a good look in the shop windows, attended the service in the Abbey, where Katey was accustomed to go almost every day of her life, and finally, having eaten a bit of dinner, he betook himself back to Blankhampton, arriving at his quarters in the small hours of the morning. If the truth be told, he was furious with himself that he had not gone straight up to the Croft and called in the ordinary way, but, somehow, it was a course that he had not dared to take. He had seen nobody he knew, and was so convinced of Katey's resentment and anger against him that he felt sure that she would not receive him if he sent in his name, and that if a strange servant had chanced to come to the door and had succeeded in bringing Katey into his presence by keeping her in ignorance of his identity, he had more than a conviction that she would simply order him

out of the house. He really felt that it was very hard on him, because, however Katey might feel about it, what he had done, he had done for the best—he had done for her sake, and however much he might be annoyed that he had not followed a conventional course during his few hours in Danford, it was certainly no use troubling himself with recriminations now that everything was over and irrevocably fixed. The Future, of course, we may mould; the Present, we may decide according to our opinions and convictions; but the Past is irrevocable and unchangeable. As it is, so it must remain, and not even the salve of a conscience that would have it otherwise is able to make any absolute change in a die which has once been cast.

CHAPTER VIII.

PUTTING ON TIME.

“We know what we are, but not what we may be.”
HAMLET.

IN order to prevent himself being left too much alone, and so having his mind filled with continual thoughts of Katey Vincent, Phil Jervis from this time plunged into the wildest depths of Blankhampton society. Now with every year that goes by, Blankhampton society changes more and more. When I first remember the place, it was distinctly sleepy. There was one cavalry regiment quartered there, and its officers were generally looked upon as persons apart from the town and townspeople. I have indeed known the time when but two invitations for a regimental ball went within the limits of the city; but all that has been altered of late. There are now soldiers of all sorts at Blankhampton, and it has been made

into the headquarters of the district. Everything seems to have become less exclusive than it used to be, and, from time to time, I see portraits of divers citizens figuring as Mayor or Sheriff of the town whom I remember, none so many years ago, as occupying quite humble positions, when they would no more have dreamed of calling on the Mansion House or the Deanery than they would have dreamed of calling on the Queen herself. I have not participated in Blankhampton social pleasures since the system of social levelling was first put into practice, but I have watched it from afar, and sometimes from a nearer view, with increasing amusement and pleasure.

Of course there is no doubt that as a nation we are certainly getting more socialistic every day that goes over our heads, and Blankhampton, which I used to remember as the most rigidly Conservative city in England, has degenerated—or improved, which you will, my readers—into the most Radical community that one could possibly imagine. So nowadays it is very different from what it used to be twenty years ago, when whole weeks went by wherein it was impossible to gather any amusement whatever excepting by going to the afternoon service at the "Parish;" and to-day, if a young man quartered in Blankhampton desires to live in a whirl of petty pleasure, he is quite able to do it. It did suit Phil Jervis to plunge himself into a very maelstrom of minor gaieties, of large and small afternoon teas, of little dances and dinners and suppers, of meetings and flirtations which had the Winter Gardens for a background.

But through all these miniature social flights he was haunted day and night by thoughts of the girl who had come to him in all trust and affection, and whom he had spurned away from the shelter of his protection. When he sat down to reason out the situation, he felt that he had done right, he felt

that he had done the gentlemanlike and straightforward thing; he felt that he had acted by her honourably, and as a man who cared for her should have acted. And yet, deep down in his heart, there lurked a something which told him (in all the odd moments when he was not seriously or psychologically defining his exact standpoint towards the girl he liked best in all the world) that he had been unnecessarily harsh, cold, and cruel towards her; that he had repaid her innocent trust by forcing her to go back to a life which was intolerable and abhorrent to her; that he had practically given her to understand that he had no intention of marrying her, and that it was not all unlikely she might, in her despair, have returned home and pledged herself to the hateful and hated John Sylvester, and if she did—well, it would be all over. Of course he would be free, but at the same time Phil Jervis did not exactly want to be free. At least, what he really did want was what a great many men wish in regard to the relations between themselves and the women they love, namely, that he should be free—as free as air, to go where he wished, to do what he liked, to live his life in his own way and to play about as most exactly suited his own convenience—while the girl whom he had honoured with his affection should remain patiently, as Mariana in the Moated Grange, waiting until it should please his highness to propose that they should make arrangements for rowing their boat together. It is a beautiful and idyllic state of affairs and a very favourite one with the sterner sex. And it is one which falls very hardly upon the weaker.

More than once during the weeks which followed he told himself that Katey had been utterly and entirely unreasonable, that she might at least have sent him a line, a mere note, informing him of her whereabouts and whether her flight had been discovered or not. She must have known, he argued angrily

with himself, that he would be very anxious about her, she *must* have known that much. But, there, it was just like a woman to leave a man in suspense day after day, and week after week, suspense that might have been avoided by the use of a sheet of note-paper and a penny stamp. He had not thought that Katey was capable of that kind of thing, and he told himself a great many times that, after all, it was a Providential thing for him that he had found her out in time. Then, between times, he would go back to his old feelings about her, of how fond of him she was, of how sweet and gentle and charming she had always been, and of what a happy time they would have together when all this cloud should have passed away from between them. But Katey made no sign. Out of the darkness of that November morning when she had slipped away from the grudging shelter of his quarters, she had passed safely through the great entrance gates into an oblivion as utter and as complete as if she had stepped into the oblivion of the grave.

Phil Jervis very soon became enormously popular in Blankhampton. Indeed, since "Beautiful Jim" had ruled over the feminine hearts in that delectable kingdom, no man, soldier, or civilian had ever taken quite the same place. You see he was heart-whole—so far as they were concerned. He flirted desperately with them all, for there was safety in numbers, and, indeed, his time was as much taken up as if he had been in the thick of a London season. With the Miss Prothero-Atkinson rejoicing in the *petit nom* of "Jill," his flirtation grew and throve apace. The two young ladies had come to Ingleby for quite a short visit; but Lady Vivian, who was the most hospitable soul in the world, and who had no greater pleasure in life, after ministering to and caring for Sir Thomas, than that of promoting marriages among her young friends, did not see the force of spoiling such a promising

beginning for want of opportunity. So she insisted on the sisters remaining on what lengthened into quite a visitation. She was much too wary to tell either of them that she imagined that she was going to provide for Jill and settle her for life! Oh, dear, yes! On the contrary, she expressed first to one and then to the other the fact that Sir Thomas was a little odd about girls staying in the house. "You see, dear," she said to Miss Jack when she first broached the idea of their visit being lengthened, "Sir Thomas is very old-fashioned, and although girls of to-day are very sweet and very nice, and I am sure they are very sensible in many ways, and take plenty of exercise and all that sort of thing, yet, on the whole, they do not please Sir Thomas. We have had a great many girls staying down here who wanted to hunt, and once or twice when Sir Thomas has given them what he considered a safe mount for a lady, they have grumbled and said they did not like hunting on sheep, and in fact all but insisted on having the pick of the stables, and of course Sir Thomas doesn't like that. It is quite a relief to my mind when I have girls staying with me who don't hunt, who like driving to the Meet with me, or riding a little in the afternoon with the gentlemen on an off day. You see, I have got to think of Sir Thomas first."

"Yes, of course," said Jack Atkinson, sensibly, knowing perfectly well all the time that the fact of their not hunting had nothing whatever to do with the prolonging of their visit. "And, of course, dear Lady Vivian, Jill and I do enjoy ourselves very much with you. We were only saying last night that really we had never stayed in a house where the girls have such a good time as you give us."

"I am glad you think so, dear," said Lady Vivian, sweetly, and quite imagining that Miss Jack had no inkling of her real motives. "The pleasure is indeed quite a mutual one, so we will take it as decided that

you and Jill are to remain a little while longer with us."

"Dear Lady Vivian, you are too kind," said Miss Jack, dabbing a little kiss, first on one, and then on the other of Lady Vivian's smooth peach-bloom cheeks.

And even between the sisters themselves the same little fiction was kept up.

Miss Jack went up to her own room, where she found her sister deep in the pages of the latest novel.

"I say, Jill," she began.

"Yes?"

"Lady Vivian wants us to stop, indefinitely I think."

Jill looked up. "Really!" she said, in a tone of surprise.

"She says that Sir Thomas likes us, that we don't bore him, that we don't want to hunt, and, in fact, they both want us to stop. So that we may as well do so, don't you think?"

"Most decidedly," returned Jill, who knew as well as if Miss Jack had put it into the plainest English, that Lady Vivian meant to bring about an engagement between her and Mr. Phil Jervis. "I would rather stop on a long visit here than anywhere, because everything is so jolly and comfortable. Nobody could be kinder than Lady Vivian herself, and as she wants us to stop, of course, we had better do so."

"Hadn't you better write and tell Mother?"

"Yes, I will write to-day, because, you see, she is expecting us back to-morrow."

So their departure was put off to some indefinite period in the future, and Phil Jervis was included in all the Ingleby festivities from that time forward, and as Ingleby was one of the most hospitable houses in the county, the little notes which found their way from Lady Vivian's boudoir to Mr. Jervis's quarters were numerous, and couched in the friendliest tones

possible. Consequently, Jill and Mr. Jervis saw a great deal of one another, and Lady Vivian was not greatly to be blamed if she fondly believed that their marriage was but a question of time.

Phil Jervis was not one of the fortunate ones who got leave for Christmas. You see, stretch out the indulgences of the festive seasons as you will, somebody must remain to keep a regiment in working order, and Phil Jervis, who had no particular desire for leave, was one of those who remained for that purpose. Need I say that Lady Vivian invited him to dine and sleep under her hospitable roof. She had the house full—full to repletion. Indeed, the housekeeper had even recourse to such conveniences as chair-beds, and lodging some of the servants in the adjoining village. It was lucky for her that some of her guests had declined her invitation, because she would certainly not have been able to put up everybody whom she wished to entertain. Among those who had declined to join her festive board were the Bishop of Blankhampton and Cecil Constable. The Bishop, ostensibly because he was going to spend his Christmas in his old London parish; Cecil Constable for no other reason than that she preferred to spend it at home—and alone. It was the only bitter drop in the cup of Lady Vivian's happiness, which was full to the brim and flowing over with all manner of lovely thoughts and gentle kindnesses to those, gentle and simple who called her friend. "It is so aggravating that Cecil will shut herself up in her loneliness!" she said plaintively to Sir Thomas when she received the girl's note. "It is so bad for her! If only she would go out in the world a little more as she has been used to do, her friends might be able to help her. It is dreadful to think of that young creature spending her life—spending even her Christmas, quite alone at Raeburn. I feel quite distressed about her, Tom, I do indeed."

"My dear," said Sir Thomas, in his kindest and most indulgent tones, "it is best to let such a trouble alone. You mean very kindly by Cecil, and you mean very kindly by the Bishop, as you do by everybody, but you will defeat your own purpose if you worry her into disliking you."

"My *dear* Tom!" said Lady Vivian, "as if Cecil could under any circumstances dislike me!"

"Well, she might," said Sir Thomas stolidly; "when a mind has been so twisted and warped as hers, when a girl's whole life has been ruined, and for no tangible and visible reason so far as we can tell, you never know in pressing her to come to you, or to let you go to her, that you may not be probing her deepest wound afresh. Take my advice, my dear, leave Cecil Constable alone. She is better so."

But Lady Vivian did not altogether acquiesce in her lord's dictum. It is true that she did not communicate further with Cecil than by writing her a little note saying how sorry she was that she had decided not to join them that year for Christmas. Miss Jack was snugly enjoying a book in Lady Vivian's boudoir while that note was being written. "So annoying!" she said to her young guest, "I am quite upset and hurt about it!"

"What's that, dear Lady Vivian?" Miss Jack asked.

"Well, it is a long story. Too long for me to tell you, but I will give you the outline. It was three years ago when the new Bishop came amongst us—you have seen him, you know what a splendid-looking man he is—and he became engaged to Miss Constable, of Raeburn, now the owner of the estate which adjoins ours. She is very good-looking and very rich, and one of the most absolutely charming girls that I have ever known in my life. He, too, is well-born and rich, besides having his great clerical position. The engagement was broken off—nobody

knows why, nobody can imagine why! Even her father did not know. At all events, it was suddenly absolutely done with, and at an end for ever. And yet those who know them, know that they are both still all the world to each other and desperately in love. He goes about as usual, and if one ventures to lead the conversation within a mile of Cecil Constable, he shuts one up, he changes the conversation as one would turn the gas out. She, poor girl, has never been the same since, has never gone into society—at least, not since her father's death—and seems to have given herself up to good works. It is a dreadful thing!"

"Not that she should have given herself up to good works, Lady Vivian?" said Miss Jack, who thought that a girl who was very rich and her own mistress was not so much to be pitied after all.

"Oh, no, dear, I didn't mean in that sense! But it is such a pity that a perfectly suitable marriage between two people who really and truly loved each other should be brought to such an untimely end. It troubles me very much when I think of poor Cecil."

"Well, I suppose she knows best what she wants," said Miss Jack, who, of course, could not take the same interest in Cecil Constable that was taken by Lady Vivian. She settled down to her book again, and Lady Vivian went back to her letter writing with a portentous sigh. "I suppose that he will come," she said, with a great effort at cheerfulness.

But he did not come. He wrote and told her that he could not thank her enough for having thought of him at this time, but that he had long been engaged to spend a few days at Christmas time with a friend in his old parish in London. He therefore begged her to excuse him, and to accept his thanks as if he had been able to say "yes" to her invitation. It was the second bitter blow to the dear lady whose

own lines had been cast in such pleasant places that it was the greatest desire she had on earth to endeavour to change the lines of all those whom she knew into places as pleasant as her own.

So Christmas and New Year came and went, and still Jack and Jill remained as guests at Ingleby, although matters between Jill and Mr. Phil Jervis did not progress with the speed which Lady Vivian would have liked them to do. For you see, Jervis meant nothing, and she did not mean much—no more, indeed, than that being a fairly good match, she would probably have taken him if he had asked her, though her heart was not touched in the smallest degree.

So January came in, a wet and muggy month which made the hearts of the hunting men rejoice; and when its course was almost run, a very sad thing happened at Ingleby, for some of the men about the place, who were tending the broad flight of steps that led from the lower pleasure gardens down to the silvery winding river, found, cast half upon the shore and half in the water, the body of a young woman terribly decomposed, having evidently been many weeks in the water. She was young, and might have been fair; masses of ruddy bronze hair streamed far behind her and lapped up and down in the little wavelets which broke upon the shore with a terrible monotony.

"Let's carry her into the boathouse," said the older man to his fellow. "Sir Thomas will not deny shelter to the poor thing."

"Aye, Bill, but it's a sad end to come to, whatever brought her to it," was the reply of the other.

CHAPTER IX.

DERELICT.

"Men shall deal unadvisedly sometimes,
Which after hours give leisure to repent."
KING RICHARD III.

IN England there is a good deal to be done when a dead person is taken out of a river, and on the day that Sir Thomas Vivian's people carried all that was left of what had once been a living, breathing woman into the boathouse hard by, Ingleby was in a state of the utmost commotion and bustle. First, the poor dead thing was laid decently upon some boards and trestles, and covered with a sheet. Then the police were fetched, and a rough examination was made of the body. It was dressed in dark-colored winter garments, and was tightly buttoned in an ulster of what must once have been a very light grey, but it was now sodden and stained and smeared after many weeks' contact with the river slime and pollution. Still, it was apparent to any observation that it was a garment which had been bought in a good shop, a garment which had cost a good deal of money. It was lined for the most part with silk, that is to say, the sleeves and the fronts of the lapels of the several pockets, and the entire cape, which was buttoned on, were all lined with a brilliant Scotch tartan, in a silk which was decidedly of a rich quality. The hat was missing, the hands were gloveless and ringless. There was no jewellery of any kind upon the body, but in an upper pocket of the ulster was a fine embroidered handkerchief, with a large initial embroidered in the corner, and a letter beginning, "My darling Katey," and

headed, "Cavalry Barracks, Blankhampton." It was signed, "Always your own friend, Phil," and those who were making the search put the two upon one side, as being the most likely to give them a clue to the identity of the poor bruised, battered corpse, which had come to an anchorage at last in the rough boat-house.

Without waiting for any further instructions, the Inspector who had the job in hand walked down into the Cavalry Barracks, and there instituted inquiries, which were not the easiest in the world to follow up, for between soldiers and police there has existed from time immemorial—that is to say, from the time when there has been such persons as soldiers or police—a dire and deadly feud, and if a soldier can in any way help to throw dust in the eyes of a policeman, you may be very sure that he will throw it with might and main. It was to men of this temperament that Inspector Gallagher presented himself, and proceeded very cautiously to put such questions as he imagined would bring him the information he required.

"Can you tell me," he began, "which of your officers is named Philip?"

"No, Mr. Inspector, I can't," replied the sentry.

"Can you tell me," said the Inspector, quite unabashed by this rebuff, "where I can get such information?"

"No, Mister Inspector, I can't," was the reply.

"Surely you must know what your officers are called?"

"No, that I don't," said the young sentry, looking about as stolid as a granite wall. "I know Mr. Cholmondeley's name. It's George."

"Yes, but I wanted to know which of your officers was called Philip," said the Inspector, with a touch of impatience in his tones.

"Ah! Then I am afraid I can't help you," said the young soldier, who, by the bye, knew Jervis as

well as he knew any of the officers in the regiment.

The Inspector advanced a few steps, and finally knocked at the door of the Orderly Room. It was opened by a soldier. "I want to ask you if you can tell me which of your officers is called Philip, or whether any of your officers are called Philip," began the Inspector blandly.

"Philip! Well, now, upon my soul I couldn't tell you. Perhaps the Sergeant can. Sergeant! Here! Can you tell this gentleman which of our officers is called Philip?"

"Philip?" said the Sergeant. "Well, now, really, Mr. Inspector—you are an Inspector, I suppose, by your clothes—well, now really, sir, I can't tell you."

"Where can I find out?" asked the Inspector.

"Where can you find out? Well, now, let me see. Jenkins, just hand over the Army List, will you?" After some fumbling, he found the page on which the particulars of the regiment and the names of the officers were set forth. But of late years Army Lists have only given initials where they used to give full names, so that the Inspector did not gather a large amount of information from this particular record. "You see, our Colonel, he is 'L. M. P. Weaver-Marston,' and there is Captain Dwyer, he's got a 'P.' in his initials, and there's Captain Desmond, he's got a 'P' in his initials. Mr. Jervis, and Mr. Drummond, and young Mr. Leyland, they have too—but whether their names are Peter or Paul, or Patrick or Philip I couldn't tell you." He could have told if he had wished, but that was a detail and one which he did not impart to the knowledge-seeking policeman.

"I suppose your Colonel doesn't happen to be here?" said he mildly.

"No, sir, he doesn't. Our Colonel is away on his long leave."

"Ah! And are the other gentlemen here?"

"Well, Mr. Jervis, he went away the end of the week. Won't be back for fifty-six days."

"Do you know where he is gone?"

"Can't say, I am sure," said the soldier, knowing perfectly well all the same that Jervis's address was posted behind the Orderly Room door.

"What about the others?" asked the Inspector.

"Well, Captain Desmond, he's here; and Mr. Drummond, he's here; and Captain Dwyer and Mr. Leyland they are away on their long leave. Sorry I can't help you any further."

"I should think you are," was the thought which flashed through the Inspector's mind, but he was too wary to give expression to it. "I should like to have a look at that List which hangs up behind the Orderly Room door," he remarked, in his mildest manner.

"Afraid I can't let you into the Orderly Room," returned the Sergeant.

"Oh, yes, you can," said the Inspector coolly. "If you have to get an order from the Adjutant to let me inspect that list, you had better go and get it, because I've got to see it before I go through them gates."

"Well, I'll see what the Adjutant says. I doubt he won't let you in," said the Sergeant, apparently yielding. "Wait a minute here, will you?"

He retired within the Orderly Room again and presently came back with a message that the Inspector could step in and see the Adjutant. He found the Adjutant sitting at a table with a book and some papers in front of him, and one or two Orderlies occupied in various pursuits. "Good morning, sir!" he said.

"Good morning," said the Adjutant. "What is it you want, Inspector?"

"I want to know, sir, what officers in this regiment are called Philip."

"What officers in this regiment are called Philip? Well, I am for one."

"Indeed, sir, is that so? Then, may I ask if you wrote this letter?" Then he held under the Adjutant's eyes the letter which had been found upon the dead girl lying in Sir Thomas Vivian's boathouse.

The Adjutant looked at it and shook his head. "No, I didn't write that. That's Mr. Jervis's writing."

"Is Mr. Jervis's name Philip, then?" the Inspector asked.

"Yes, it is."

"Then, sir, I am afraid I shall have to trouble you for Mr. Jervis's address."

Now the officers of a regiment do not share the loathing with which the men of the ranks regard those who wear the blue uniform of the policeman, and from his position as Adjutant Mr. Drummond could not, of course, keep back anything which a representative of the law desired officially to know; therefore he gave Phil Jervis's address immediately, and without any attention at withholding it. "By the bye, why do you want to know Mr. Jervis's whereabouts?" he asked.

"This letter, sir," said the Inspector, "was taken off the person of a young woman who was found in the river yesterday."

"Good Heavens!" the other cried.

"And having no clue to her identification other than through this letter, we had no choice but to come down and find the writer if we could."

"No, of course not, of course not. Well, I am quite sure Mr. Jervis will give you every information in his power. He is a very popular officer—a very good fellow. The Colonel has a very high opinion of him. I am quite sure Mr. Jervis will be able to

explain his connection with this young lady entirely."

"Well, sir, I hope for his own sake he will," said the Inspector; "and I will bid you good morning, and I am very much obliged to you."

"Now I wonder," said the Adjutant to himself, as the sound of the Inspector's heavy footsteps died away in the distance, "I wonder what the devil Jervis has been up to now! It isn't like him to get into a mess with a woman, and yet, that was his writing. I would swear to it, blotted and blurred as it was."

CHAPTER X.

A LINK IN THE CHAIN.

' Conviction comes like lightning ;
In vain you seek it, and in vain you fly."

CRABBE.

THE address which the Adjutant had given to Inspector Callaghan was apparently that of a country house about three hundred miles from Blankhampton, and he immediately telegraphed to the police at the nearest post town to keep their eye upon a visitor in that particular house until they should hear from him again. The following day, however, he received a letter to say that Mr. Jervis had already left Bridge-town Manor House for Ireland. Meanwhile, however, the Inspector did not trouble about this small check in the running of the case, knowing that in due time Mr. Jervis's address would be telegraphed to his regiment. They had already found another clue—more than another clue—for the address of the maker of

the ulster was, when the body came to be closely examined, still plainly visible on the loop by which it was intended to be hung up, and the address was that of the largest draper in Danford.

When Sir Thomas Vivian carried this particular bit of information in to his excited women folk, among whom were still Jack and Jill Atkinson, Jill looked up with a light of knowledge in her eyes. "What did you say she was like, Sir Thomas?" she asked.

"Well, poor thing, one can hardly say. You see, she has been in the water so long."

"But you have not seen her, Tom?" cried Lady Vivian.

"Well, yes, I have, my dear, as much as there is left of her. She looks very dreadful, of course, and really there is nothing but her hair that I think her people will be able to swear by, if she has any people, poor soul!"

"Her hair! What sort of hair?" cried Jill, breathlessly.

"Oh, quite lovely, I should think, when alive—masses of it, of a bright ruddy bronze, and hanging far below her waist. Hair that a painter would rejoice in, though now, of course, it is in a terrible condition."

Jill's heart went down with a run to zero. "And what was the coat like that she was wearing?"

"Well, of course, that is almost unrecognisable, though I dare say the maker will be able to describe it," said Sir Thomas. "It has been a light grey coat once, and has a large cape over it, lined with Scotch plaid stuff."

The two sisters turned on each other simultaneously.

"Katey had it on that night!" cried Jill, with a gasp.

"Oh, my dear, it can't be Katey."

"But the hair—and the coat—oh, Sir Thomas,

that poor dead girl must be Katey Vincent, of Danford! I saw her here on the night of Mrs. Forde's party!"

"And who is Katey Vincent, my dear?" put in Lady Vivian, in her blandest tones.

"She was a girl we knew at Danford, where we spent a good part of last summer," Jill replied. "We used to see a good deal of Katey Vincent, who was the niece of some people who lived in a very nice large house near to the house we were staying in. We used to play tennis with her a lot. She was an awfully nice girl, one of the nicest girls I ever knew, and you remember, Lady Vivian, our waiting at the station for Mr. Mordaunt and Mr. Vansittart after we had been to Mrs. Forde's afternoon party with you? We had the omnibus out. Do you remember that it was turned end-ways to the curb?"

"I remember," said Lady Vivian.

"I was sitting nearest to the door, and I saw Katey Vincent come out of the station dressed in a light grey ulster, and it had a tartan lining—I would swear to it. She didn't see me, for she had the electric light full in her eyes as she came out. She was carrying a little bundle, a rug or something done up with a strap. She got into a cab which was quite close to our carriage. I didn't hear what she said, but I heard the old cabman say, 'Cavalry Barracks? Certainly, miss,' and then he got up and drove off. And I spoke to Mr. Jervis about it, and he said he knew nothing!"

"That sounds odd, Mary," said Sir Thomas, turning round and looking at his wife, "because there was a letter in the pocket beginning 'My darling Katey,' and signed 'Always your old friend Phil,' and it was headed 'Cavalry Barracks, Blankhampton.'"

"But you don't think that Katey could have been coming to see him?" cried Jill aghast.

"It looks very suspicious," said Sir Thomas, in his

most magisterial tones "When was it that you saw her? And what did Mr. Jervis tell you?"

"H'm—let me think now—Mrs. Forde's party was on the eleventh of November. What did he say? I told him that I had seen Katey Vincent come out of the station that night, and I asked him if he knew where she was staying—that would be on the very next day—it must have been—for it was the day he came over here. You remember his coming, Lady Vivian? And you asked him to come back to dinner. Don't you remember?"

"Of course I do, my dear, perfectly well."

"Well, she had been to see him the previous night then. He told me that she didn't know anybody in Blankhampton, that she had told him so, and that he couldn't believe for a moment that she had been here—that I must have been mistaken. I didn't tell him that I had heard the cabman say that about the Cavalry Barracks, but I asked him if there were any married officers living in the Barracks, and he said yes, but that if she had gone to visit them he would certainly have known it."

"I am afraid it looks very strange," said Lady Vivian, after a long pause, "but surely he had not expected her, or else he would have gone to meet her at the station; and, of course, if she had gone to see him unexpectedly, it would be a dreadful thing for a lady to do, and he naturally would not wish to tell **any one who knew her that she had done such a foolish thing.**"

Lady Vivian was always by way of making excuses for any wrong-doers that happened to come across her path. She was, perhaps, the kindest soul that ever breathed the polluted air of this censorious world. Sir Thomas, however, was not given to making excuses for people. You see he was a magistrate, Justice of the Peace, and as such, with a suspicious death into which he would have officially to enquire, he felt that he could not allow private

feeling to enter into his calculations. Therefore he hastily swallowed down his cup of tea and went out of the room. In the outer hall he met the butler, who was taking in a fresh relay of muffins—"Oh, by the bye, send James down to the boathouse. I think some of the Inspector's people will be there. Say I want to see somebody at once. The Inspector himself, if he is about."

"Yes, Sir Thomas," replied the butler. He got rid of his muffins, and despatched the young footman, James, down to the boathouse. He, fortunately, was just in time to catch Inspector Gallagher as he was leaving.

"If you please, Mr. Inspector, Sir Thomas wishes to speak to you at once," was his message.

"Oh, very well, I will come up to the house," said the Inspector in reply.

On arriving at the house, he was shown into Sir Thomas's private sanctum, a fair-sized room, half library, half business room. He found Sir Thomas sitting at the great knee-hole desk writing. "Ah, I am glad they caught you, Inspector," he said, getting up and moving towards the fireplace. "I am glad they caught you; I wanted to see you particularly. I have got a clue to the girl's identity?"

"You don't say so, Sir Thomas?"

"Yes, I do." And then he repeated to him the entire conversation that had taken place on his giving the ladies of the house the latest news of the great excitement.

"Now, Danford," said Sir Thomas, thrusting his hands deep down into his pockets and looking more judicial than ever, "was the place where the White Horse were quartered before they came to Blankhampton, and from what Miss Atkinson tells me, and from the clue given by the letter, there can be very little doubt but that she took the journey between Danford and Blankhampton on the eleventh of November for the purpose of seeing

Mr Jervis. You see, he spoke of it here to Miss Atkinson the next day, or rather she spoke of it to him, and he didn't admit knowing anything whatever about it. In fact, she told him positively that she had seen her come out of the station, and he declared that she must have been mistaken, that it was quite impossible Miss Vincent could have been in the town. Indeed, he seems to have told her that he was pretty sure she knew nobody in Blankhampton. By the bye, I suppose you have found out where Mr. Jervis is, Inspector?"

"Oh, yes, Sir Thomas, he is in Ireland. I've got my eye on him. That's all right. Of course, there may be nothing in it, and he may be as innocent as the day, but equally, of course, the poor young woman's 'ead has been pretty much knocked about."

"What!" cried Sir Thomas.

"I am afraid, Sir Thomas, that is so. Dr. Arlington, he came up this afternoon, in fact he is just gone, and he made a thorough examination of the remains, and he gives it as his opinion that it is a case of murder."

"Good God!" cried Sir Thomas.

"Yes, Sir Thomas, you may well say that, but that is the doctor's opinion. You see, the back of the poor young woman's 'ead is about smashed to a jelly, and of course, although a young woman who is disappointed in love might commit suicide and drown herself, she couldn't break the back of her own skull in first, could she?"

"No," said Sir Thomas, shaking his head wisely, "that is so, Inspector, very true, very true."

"And so, Sir Thomas, I thought of going down to the barracks to get my gentleman recalled home without any fuss. Very disagreeable if we have to go and arrest him at a country house, and it is a long journey to make, and of course, one wants to give the gentleman the benefit of the doubt as long as one

can. But it is my opinion between you and me, Sir Thomas, that he did it."

"I hope not," said Sir Thomas. "It is bad enough to have to look closely into a murder case when both parties are total strangers to one, but to feel that a man with possibly the stain of murder on his hands should be one who has broken your bread and taken your hand in friendship, even before his own were cleansed from the blood of his victim, is a most dreadful thing!"

"I am afraid I shall have to get you to sign a warrant, Sir Thomas," said the Inspector, on whom this flight of elephantine fancy on the part of Sir Thomas made no impression.

"Dear me, and my own guest! Dear me, it is dreadful! Couldn't you get Lord Lucifer to do it?"

"I am afraid not, Sir Thomas," said the Inspector. "You see the event happened on your own land—at your very door, one may say."

"Well, the body was found on my land," said Sir Thomas. "We don't know where the event happened."

"No, no, that's so, Sir Thomas. But still, we can only go by where we found the body. And if that is all you've got to say to me, Sir Thomas, I should like to be getting on. I don't like losing time in a case like this."

"Very good," said Sir Thomas. "Then you will let me know when anything turns up."

"Certainly, Sir Thomas, certainly I will. But I should like to have that warrant to-night."

It was no use for Sir Thomas Vivian, good soul that he was, to think of wriggling out of the writing of that warrant, because he had to do it. The Inspector stood by the big knee-hole desk, fishily cold, and entirely without any of the feeling which moved Sir Thomas when his magisterial stiffness somewhat failed him; and before he left the room Sir Thomas,

with a good deal of groaning, had signed the paper which he believed would be the first strand in the rope around Phil Jervis's neck.

CHAPTER XI.

A PLAIN QUESTION.

“ Present fears
Are less than horrible imaginings.”
MACBETH.

WHEN Inspector Gallagher left Sir Thomas Vivian's study, he went round to the stables, where he found the little cart in which he trundled himself about the country on the business of the law, waiting for him.

“Any fresh news about that 'ere job, Mr. Inspector?” asked the stable boy, who was holding the pony's head.

“No particular fresh news, Jim,” the Inspector replied.

“We did 'ear as how it was a case of murder,” the boy ventured.

“Well, Jim,” said the Inspector, as he settled himself in the cart, and wrapped the warm rug about his knees, “well, if a skull as has been beat to a jelly means murder, then I should say this 'ere job does mean murder; otherwise, it might be an accident, or it might be a suicide,” and then he gathered up the reins, and with a nod to the boy started the pony off at a brisk trot. It was a well-stepping and willing little beast, and brought him in next to no time to the Cavalry Barracks, although the distance was a good three miles.

He stopped at the great entrance gate, and in-

quired whether the Adjutant was in the Orderly Room, and received for answer that he was not there, but that he had just passed through the gates in plain clothes, and would probably be found in his own quarters. Now in Blankhampton the Adjutant's quarters are situated in the same block as the Mess rooms, and are, indeed, about the best rooms in the Barracks. The Inspector gave his pony in charge of a soldier who was hanging about, and, following his directions, mounted the stone stairs until he found the door marked "Adjutant's Quarters." At this he thumped, a quiet respectful thump, quite different from the careless bang-bang with which a brother officer would have prefaced his coming. A voice called out from within that he was to enter, and he did so. The Adjutant, Mr. Drummond, was sitting in a big chair, reading a book and smoking. He looked up, and when he saw who his visitor was, put down his book and got up. If the truth be told, he was something more than anxious about Jervis, who was a particular friend of his, and he was in the frame of mind which scents danger from afar. "Ah, is that you, Inspector? Come in. Yes. Shut the door, please. I suppose you have come about that affair?"

"I am afraid I have," said the Inspector, gravely.

"Oh! Any explanation? Anything fresh turned up since I saw you this morning?"

"Well, sir, the doctor has seen the remains, and made an examination, as thorough as could be under the circumstances, and his opinion is—neither accident nor suicide."

"Good heavens! You don't say so! Not murder?"

"Yes, sir, murder, I am afraid—the back of the poor thing's 'ead is simply beaten to a jelly. She must have been dead long before she got into the water. In fact, the doctor said there was no water in the lungs at all—at least, not before death. And

as I may as well tell you at once, sir, without any bones about it, that I have a warrant here for the arrest of Mr. Jervis."

"Oh, Jervis never did it! You are on the wrong tack, my man. He never did it. Take my word for it, Mr. Jervis was never mixed up with it in any way. He may have known the lady—indeed, in the face of that letter he must have known her; but you are on the wrong track altogether, take my word for it."

"Well, sir, I might take your word for it, but the law would never be satisfied with either your word or mine, except as direct evidence, and your opinion of Mr. Jervis's general character doesn't amount to direct evidence. For the matter of that, it barely amounts to evidence of any kind, although if the worst comes to the worst, you will have an opportunity of speaking in his favour, as I suppose your Colonel will, and any other of the officers that are likely to have weight with the jury. But facts are facts, and I've got pretty good evidence that she was with Mr. Jervis on a certain date. At all events, if he is innocent, he will not mind coming back to be confronted with the whole affair."

"Of course not, of course not. I had better telegraph for him. I had better recall him."

"I was going to suggest that you might do so," said the Inspector. "Of course, it is very unpleasant to go and arrest him at a country house and make an unpleasant scene and all that, and I think if you will recall him, that will be better. At all events, no harm will be done."

"I will write the telegram now," said the Adjutant, who believed in his friend as implicitly as he believed that he had not done it himself. He went to the door and shouted for a servant—"Jackson!—Jack—son!" An answering shout came back from the far distance, and almost immediately a tall, good-looking soldier in plain clothes appeared at the door.

"Oh, Jackson, go down to the Orderly Room and find out whether any telegram has come during the day from Mr. Jervis. If so, bring me back his address."

"Yes, sir," said Jackson, and immediately disappeared.

"Sit down, Inspector, sit down," said Drummond civilly. "It is a very bad business this. I don't like it. The Colonel won't like it at all. It is a horrible thing to have one of our officers mixed up with a shady case of that kind. I suppose you will be turning the whole barracks out of windows presently?"

"No, sir, no. I shall have to turn out Mr. Jervis's quarters, examine his papers, question his servants, that's all."

"H'm!"

"I suppose you don't happen to know," he continued, in a different tone, "how Mr. Jervis spent the eleventh of November?"

"No, I haven't the smallest notion. Still, I daresay he will be able to account for his time—in fact, I feel as sure of it as I do of my own existence."

"Yes, of course, sir, but I thought you might have remembered the date, having had something to remember it by."

"I was away on long leave. I was down in the depths of Cornwall from the first of November till the end of the month. Of what went on here during that time, I really know nothing, but doubtless there are others who can tell you pretty closely what happened. Very few secrets are kept in a barrack, Inspector."

"No, I daresay not, sir. It will perhaps help me in my business. I suppose, as you are the Adjutant, that I had better show you this as my authority for searching Mr. Jervis's rooms."

"Oh, but you won't meddle with his things until he comes back himself?"

"I should prefer to look round at once," said the Inspector, looking up with very cold eyes at the officer. "It was for that reason that I obtained this warrant."

"Oh, well, of course, I won't stand in your way. I should have preferred to wait myself until Mr. Jervis returned, but if you have got right on your side, it is useless for me to protest that it is not exactly a polite thing to turn a man's rooms inside out during his absence. However, come this way, and I will show you where they are."

Now it happened that Tinker, Jervis's servant, had been giving his master's sword and spurs the weekly clean up, which was what kept them in order during his absence.

"Is this Mr. Jervis's servant?" said the Inspector, eyeing Tinker from head to foot.

"I am that same, sor," said Tinker, returning the stare as coolly as possible.

"Well, I want to ask you a question. Do you remember anything about the evening of the eleventh of November?"

CHAPTER XII.

TINKER.

"The waters swell before a boisterous storm;
But leave it all to God."

KING RICHARD III.

Now it happened that Tinker had heard nothing whatever about the enquiry at the entrance gates for an officer of the White Horse bearing the Christian name of "Philip." He was a very good and stolid young man, not over-blessed with education, and he occupied himself more with looking after his young

woman for the time being than he did in reading newspapers, or, for the matter of that, in indulging in barrack gossip. At the point-blank question of the Inspector he scratched his head. That, of course, was a natural thing to do, because a private soldier always scratches his head whatever question is put to him. I have myself seen a private soldier in process of being married, groomed and polished until he resembled the "Monarch of Monarchs" for refulgence, with his smooth, well-cropped hair positively shining again with elbow grease—and perhaps grease of another kind—and when the officiating clergyman put the all-important question to him—"Wilt thou have this woman to thy wedded wife, to have and to hold?" etc., he took the opportunity to scratch his head before committing himself to the answer—"I will!"

On that occasion Tinker scratched his head in some perplexity, looked at Drummond to see whether he would be right in giving a plain answer to what was certainly a very plain question, and gathering from the eagerness on that gentleman's face that he was as anxious to hear the answer as the Inspector, he replied—"Yes, I remember all about the eleventh of November."

"Oh, you do, do you?" said the Inspector. "Well, then, you can let us hear about it."

In spite of the presence of the officer, there were still lingering traces apparent in Tinker's manner of the old feud between red-coats and blue-bottles, and when he replied, he addressed himself pointedly and particularly to Mr. Drummond. "Well, sir, I think you was on long leave at that time?"

"I was," said Drummond.

"Mr. Jervis, he got a two days' leave, and he went to London. He came back on the evening of the eleventh of November about nine o'clock——"

"Oh, he did? He came back that evening at nine

o'clock! You hear, Mr. Inspector! I knew there would be an explanation."

"And what else happened?" said the Inspector, biting his nails and looking at Tinker with half-closed eyes. "What makes you remember the evening so particularly?"

"I remember the evening, sir," said Tinker, still addressing Drummond, "because when Mr. Jervis got back to barricks there was a lady here."

"A lady? Oh! What kind of a lady?"

"Oh, she was a lady right enough," said Tinker. "Mr. Jervis said she was his sister. Rare and put out he was and all to find her here!"

"How do you know that?"

"Well, sir, Mr. Jervis haven't got the softest voice in the world, and if he don't trouble to lower it, you can 'ear what he says right down the passage."

"Yes, yes, I know," said Drummond. "You heard what he said, didn't you?"

"I heard some of what he said, sir," said Tinker stolidly.

"Yes, go on. It will all have to come out, Tinker, so that you might as well let this gentleman hear anything that you have to say."

"Well, Mr. Jervis, he told me she was his sister, and I must say that he behaved as if she was his sister, because he pitched into her like anything for coming! I 'eard him tell her she must have been mad, that she couldn't stop here, that she must have been out of her mind, and that she would have to go back again sharp. They talked for a long time. I could hear his voice down in my kitchen just below, and presently he came to the door and called me, and he says to me—'Go and order dinner for two. My sister has come to see me on very important business. She will have some dinner with me before she returns,' and I must say, the young lady looked miserable enough to be Mr. Jervis's sis-

ter! But later on he came out and told me that she could not possibly get back that night, and I was to make up a bed for him in any officer's room that happened to be vacant. I put a fire and made up the bed in Mr. Adams's room, and I took a whisky and soda up there to Mr. Jervis."

"And he slept there?"

"Well, sir, I believe the gentlemen were up very late that night. They were drawing Mr. Marjoribanks. They were certainly at it at two o'clock that morning. But probably Mr. Greville could tell you what took place better'n me, for I was asleep soon after two o'clock."

"But didn't you sleep in your own quarters?"

"I did not that night, sir. I made a shake-down in the kitchen as I did sometimes. I had orders from my master to wake him at half past six, and I went up to the young lady's door first. I got no answer when I knocked, and in knocking again a bit harder it slipped open, and I found that she had gone. I went and woke Mr. Jervis and told him about it."

"Was he surprised to hear that she was gone?" the Inspector asked.

"Yes, my master was very much surprised. The young lady 'adn't slept in her bed, and she 'adn't left a letter—nothing! Mr. Jervis could 'ardly believe it."

"And what did he do afterwards?"

"He didn't do anything out of the ordinary course," replied Tinker.

"But did he make no effort to find out how or where the young lady had gone?"

"Not that I know of," replied the soldier.

"He was asleep when you found him?"

"Oh, lord, yes, sir, he was asleep right enough. I had to shake him three times before I could wake him!"

"What made you say just now that she was not Mr. Jervis's sister?"

"I never did say so!" answered Tinker, sharply, directly answering the Inspector for the first time.

"No, I know that, but you said that Mr. Jervis said she was his sister, and you added that you must say that he behaved as if she was his sister. What did you mean by that?"

"Well, I mean that I knew she wasn't his sister."

"How do you know it?"

"Because Mr. Jervis has no sister. I've 'eard him say so many a time."

"Ah, I see. Had you ever seen that young lady before?"

"Many a time," answered Tinker, promptly.

"Oh, you had! Where?"

"At Danford."

"Oh! Then you knew who she was?"

"I did," said Tinker, stolidly.

"What was her name?"

"Her name was Vincent. I knew her the minute I clapt eyes on her. When she walked up them stairs inquiring for Mr. Jervis, I knew there would be a pretty kettle of fish when Mr. Jervis came back and found her. Mr. Jervis wasn't one as liked them sort of larks, and I must say he give it 'er proper. I heard him myself."

"Oh, well, I don't think I need ask you any more questions just now, thank you, Jones."

"Tinker, sir," said the man, sharply.

"Oh, yes, Tinker. Thank you, Tinker. Now then, Mr. Drummond," turning to the Adjutant, who had stayed more from a chivalrous feeling of standing by his friend and seeing fair-play during his absence than from any desire to satisfy his curiosity, "if you please, sir, I will just look over the room. You will stay, won't you?"

"I shall certainly stay," said Drummond, quietly.

"That is better," said the Inspector, who seemed to the soldier, accustomed to a very different life, to be

very careless and casual in his observations. He glanced at the invitations in the letter rack, looked at the photographs, including one of Katey herself, placed in various parts of the room, closely examined a rack of walking-sticks which hung upon the wall, then as closely scrutinised a corresponding rack in which hung various whips and hunting crops. He examined the spurred boots that were lying about, and made Tinker turn out all his master's clothing, which he looked over quickly, but with an alert professional eye, which struck you as one that would miss nothing that was there to be seen. This over he went to the chest of drawers, and with apparent carelessness examined the contents of such as were open.

"I suppose this is a despatch drawer," he said, indicating one that was locked.

"Yes, I should imagine so," returned Drummond. "We most of us have a despatch box in that drawer."

"I wonder if I have a key to fit it."

"I don't think you ought to open that, you know," said the officer, who was aghast at the want of ceremony on the part of the Inspector.

"My warrant enables me to open anything and everything, to use false keys, or to break open locks. The law knows no barriers, Mr. Drummond."

"Oh, very well, you must do as you please."

The Inspector, however, had no key that would fit the lock of Jervis's despatch drawer, so he put a seal upon it rather than break it open. "I will look at that in Mr. Jervis's presence. By the bye, what is that key hanging up there?" he inquired, turning suddenly to the soldier's servant.

"That key, sor," replied Tinker, who was wondering what on earth it all meant, "is not belonging to Mr. Jervis at all."

"No? Why is it here, then?"

The man turned to his officer, "It is the key of the little wicket, you know, sir."

"Oh, I didn't know Mr. Jervis had it."

"Mr. Jervis has had it ever since we have been here, sir."

"It is the key of a little gate leading out into the road. Rather a short cut to the town," Drummond explained, in an off-hand sort of way to the Inspector.

The Inspector promptly put the key in his pocket. "I will take that key for the present, if you please," he remarked, coolly. "And now, that's all I want to see just now. I should like to know if Mr. Jervis's address has been received."

"Certainly. Come back to my quarters. Jackson is sure to be back by this time."

They left Jervis's quarters then, and went at once back to the Adjutant's own quarters. There they found Jackson busily engaged in tidying up. It is, on the whole, an enlightening process, to watch a soldier's servant tidying his master's sitting-room. He does it so well and so deftly, yet in such an awkward and uneasy sort of way. He arrives at the desired end, but his way of getting there is a marvel to the beholder.

"Oh, Jackson, did you get Mr. Jervis's address?"

"It is on the table, sir," said Jackson, putting the finishing touches to the chimney-piece.

The address was written on a slip of paper, in an ordinary clerkly hand.

"It must have come since I was in the Orderly Room," said Drummond to the Inspector. "Then I will send off the telegram at once."

"I think that is your best course, sir," said the Inspector, in a tone of satisfaction.

"Oh, yes. Mr. Jervis should know of this as soon as possible. At the same time, of course, you understand I don't believe a single word of your theory. I don't believe in it in the least."

"No, perhaps not; but, of course, evidence is evidence, and being partly circumstantial, of course a

suspected person is considered innocent until he is proved guilty, and I am sure, sir, I hope with all my heart that it will turn out to be a mare's nest."

When Inspector Gallagher had gone, and was walking briskly across the square towards the entrance gates, Drummond stood at the window of his quarters—not watching the Inspector's retreating figure, for it was too dark to do so—but gazing out reflectively over the rows of twinkling lights which defined the great vacant square. "Yes," he said, with a deep sigh, as he dug his hands a shade further down into his pockets. "I should think there is a lot of hope about you, my friend! If Jervis, or I, or anyone else in the White Horse, had our lives dependent upon *your* hopes, not an insurance office in the kingdom would think them worth the value of a penny!"

CHAPTER XIII.

RECALLED.

"You can speak well if your tongue
Deliver the message of your heart."

FORD.

THE routine of a great country house is very much the same in Ireland as in England. Perhaps in Ireland, life is a little more given up to hunting than even in the greater kingdom; at all events, when Jervis arrived at Listower Castle he found not a soul left within doors excepting the servants and the children.

"Shure, sor," said the Irish butler, who received him at the end of his journey, "me lord is out huntin' and me lady is out huntin', and all the gentlemen is

out huntin' too, and the three young ladies stayin' in the house, they are gone out huntin', and there's no sayin' when they may be back."

So there was no choice for Jervis but to go in and make himself as comfortable as circumstances would permit. As a matter of fact, he did not suffer very much. The great drawing-room was all aglow with firelight, and before the butler could bring him the tea which he had consented to partake of, the two little daughters of the house came down from their nursery and entertained him highly. They were charming and beautiful children—twins of nine years old, echoes the one of the other, yet in a certain sense wholly different in looks and bearing. Now Jervis, like most popular men, was extremely fond of children, and he laid himself out to please these two little people whom he had never seen before.

"Mother will be so sorry that she was out when you arrived," said Di, the elder of the two.

"Oh, she is having a very good time," said Jervis, "it doesn't matter in the least. Besides she has left such charming substitutes."

"What is a substitute?" asked Vi, the other twin.

"A substitute," said Jervis, "is a person or a thing which is put in the place of another person or thing."

"Oh—are we put in the place of Mother?"

"Yes. You are receiving me, you are my hostesses, you are making me welcome, just as your mother would have done, so you are your mother's substitutes," he explained.

"Ah, I see, yes. You will have some tea, won't you?"

"I really should be very glad of a cup of tea," said Jervis, in a confidential tone.

"Di will pour it out."

"You won't scald yourself, will you?" said Jervis, who could scarcely believe that a child of nine years old was capable of wielding a teapot.

"I shall not scald myself," said Di, with a great air of dignity, "because I generally pour it out when Mother is alone, or if Father is alone. You see, Mother and Father get so fearfully tired and done up hunting—and they hunt every day—that they never want to do anything when they come in, except to rest and eat and drink."

So Miss Di, after several grave enquiries as to the amount of milk and sugar he preferred, poured out the tea and performed the like service for herself and for her sister, while Vi brought from a little brass stand which stood on the hearth a covered dish.

"This is a muffin dish," she remarked, before she disclosed the contents, "but it is not muffins that are in it, because we can't get muffins here. We can only get them from Dublin, and Mother thinks they are stale when they get here, but this is a special cake which we always have at Listower. It is very good."

"I am sure it is," said Jervis, who was desperately hungry, and did not want to stay admiring the outside of that muffin dish any longer.

"People call it different names," Vi continued, "some people call it short cake, and others call it girdle cake——"

"And I shall call it waiting cake if you don't be quick, young lady," said Jervis, with a laugh.

At that she whipped off the cover and he helped himself liberally to the tempting contents of the dish. After this the trio became fast friends, and the two little maidens trotted out all their special pets for the new visitor's delectation. There were two huge old hounds—well, not so very old, because they had been born on the same day as the two little girls—Gerda and Guelph, and a sleek Yorkshire terrier with a parting down the middle of his back, and very little distinction between his head and his tail. Besides him was a snowy Maltese, very delicate and

given to shivering, a creature which sat up and held one paw aloft, as if it had just suffered a serious injury. Then they showed him a great cage of love birds, all sitting half asleep in ridiculous pairs, looking like partners at a ball. In another window stood Polly, a wicked old parrot, who remarked in the strongest of brogues—"Poor Polly! Poor old bird! Who's that Sassenach?"

"That's you," said Vi, encouragingly.

"What does he mean by it?" asked Jervis, though he knew perfectly well.

"A Sassenach," explained the young lady, "is a name for Englishmen which Irishmen do not intend as a compliment."

"Oh!" said Jervis.

"Polly," said Di, "do you know you are very rude! Mr. Jervis is not a Sassenach. He is an Englishman."

"Sassenach!" said Polly stubbornly.

"Yes, I know, and the other day you said that the MacDermott was a Sassenach, and he very nearly wrung your neck for you. Come along, Mr. Jervis, never mind her! She's a stupid old thing! Come out into the hall and let us find Margo."

Now "Margo" was a very small pet monkey, which lived in an exceedingly warm corner of the ingle-nook which was the chief feature of the entrance hall. She was a beautiful little creature, small and soft and silky, with a wise, dark, little face and pathetic eyes. A creature who shook hands as if she had been a tiny woman, and stroked Vi's face as tenderly as you see a baby do.

"Isn't she just lovely, Mr. Jervis?" cried Vi, cuddling the little creature up in her arms.

"Yes, she is charming," said Jervis, "charming! I don't know when I have seen anything so charming and pretty!"

They sat chatting in the ingle-nook until the rest

of the household returned from hunting. They were tired and splashed, and extremely excited. They had had the most perfect run that had been known for years past. They really had achieved everything that the hunting field could afford, and, as Lady Listower said, "Really, Mr. Jervis, I was sorry to be out, but I have had such a lovely time, it is hypocrisy to apologise to you."

"My dear Lady Listower, don't dream of apologising. I have been most admirably taken care of and entertained."

"That's good," said Lady Listower, putting a hand on the shoulder of either child. "And did you give Mr. Jervis tea, darlings?"

"Oh, yes, Mother! Tea cakes, and honey cakes, and rock cakes, and bread and butter and toast!"

"What? Why, you must have gourmandised?"

"Yes, we did," said Vi, "we regularly gourmandised, Mother."

Of course, after this a fresh relay of tea was brought in for the hungry ones, and an hour went by before any of them made a move towards the process of dressing for dinner. And by and by, when they were all assembled in the dining-room, Jervis found himself seated on his hostess's left hand. Lady Listower was a very pretty woman, and of a very gay and buoyant disposition—really a woman without a care in the world. For she had two splendid boys at Eton, the twins, who were everything that a mother's heart could desire, and a younger boy, who was just then away on a visit. Her husband was under forty, was in every way the man of her choice, and, in turn, simply worshipped the ground on which she trod. They were exceedingly rich and exceedingly popular, and Jervis felt himself very much in luck to be accorded the place of honour on her left.

The actual dinner was over, and the pleasant half-hour of chat over the walnuts had arrived, when a

footman appeared with a telegram upon a silver tray. "Oh, thank you," said Jervis, and put it down beside his plate. The man hesitated for a moment.

"Will ye be aither sendin' an answer, sor?" he enquired presently in deferential under-tones, "because it is six miles to the nearest telegraph office, and the messenger is waitin'."

"In that case, Lady Listower, may I——?"

"Oh, of course, do open it."

He did so, and to his astonishment read the following message:—"Return immediately. A matter of the gravest importance requires your presence. Lose no time.—Drummond. White Horse, Blankhampton."

He stared at the paper for a moment, then looked up at his hostess. "Do you know, Lady Listower, I am awfully sorry, but I shall have to leave you."

"What!" she cried, "on the very first day of your visit?"

"Well, here's a telegram recalling me to the regiment at once. What can I do? Is it possible for me to get back to-night?"

"No, indeed, it is not. There is a train at half-past seven in the morning, which is the best you can take."

"Then will you allow me to go and write an answer?"

She signified her assent by a gesture, and Jervis made the best of his way to the library, where he found the telegraph forms. His reply was:—"Impossible to come to-night. No train. Leave here 7.30 in morning. Come straight back. Hope nothing serious.—Jervis."

"Now I wonder," said he to himself, when the man had left the room and he was still sitting at the great black oak table, "I wonder what the devil is up! Can we be ordered off at half-an-hour's notice? Is anything going on anywhere? They're never

sending us to South Africa. They would never send us out to Canada over that bit of trouble there was the other day. No, it can't be that! Well, it's very queer, but I suppose there's nothing for it but waiting till I get back. Great pity they didn't catch me at the other place. Anyhow, I am glad to get a night's sleep in between the two crossings."

He did not worry himself about the summons. It was a nuisance, of course, because Listower Castle was a pleasant house to stay in, and his host and hostess were everything that the most fastidious guest could desire, and he would like to have seen more of those very charming children. However, that was not to be. Perhaps they would ask him again later on, unless he should have to go out to Canada or South Africa on some little foreign business, and so be kept out of the way of pleasant country house visits for at least some months to come. He went back to the dining-room then feeling that it was no use to worry—I think I have said before that Jervis was not of a worrying disposition—that as he had one evening he might as well enjoy it as much as he could. And a couple of hours later, when the party separated for the night, he said good-bye to Lord Listower, and thanked them for the glimpse he had of their charming house.

"Of course," said Lady Listower, as he held her hand, "you will come to us another time. When you go home you will let us know of course why you are sent for in this unexpected way, and if you can come back to us during your long leave, you must just let me know. I should be able to do with you, you know, at any time during the next two months." For which he thanked her, and finally went unsuspectingly and quite happily off to bed.

Of course it was not the most pleasant thing in the world to have to get up and drive six miles on a winter's morning in time to catch a train at half-past

seven, but the soldier on leave who is recalled to headquarters knows no other course than to obey, and as it had to be done, Jervis did it cheerfully and without much grumbling. The day was cold and muggy, and the short journey across the channel was a very choppy one. But Jervis smoked hard all the way, sometimes studying his fellow passengers, and now and again wondering why he had been summoned so hurriedly back to the regiment. The papers told him nothing, as of course the mysterious death in the neighbourhood of Blankhampton had not yet reached the London dailies. So after travelling all day he drove up to his own quarters in the late evening, still blissfully ignorant of the reason for his recall.

He was evidently expected, for a fire was burning in the grate and the candles were ready for lighting. Tinker came hurrying to meet him with an anxious and somewhat scared expression on his face.

"Here, take my traps up," said Jervis, "and just let Mr. Drummond know that I have got back. Find out where he is, and if he can come and see me."

Tinker, with scarcely a word, hurriedly did his bidding, and Jervis stood for a minute or two warming his hands by the blazing fire. "I wonder what is up!" he said to himself. "Ugh! How cold it is!"

He stood there until the sound of footsteps told him that Tinker was returning. "Mr. Drummond will be here in a minute, sir," he announced at the door. "Shall I light the candles, sir, before I bring your luggage up?"

"No, better bring my luggage up first. Somebody will be tumbling over it if you leave it in the way."

So Tinker went down again, and presently Jervis heard the sound of other footsteps than his. They came nearer and nearer, and then Drummond walked into the room.

"Hullo, old man!" said Jervis, "what's the mean-

ing of this mysterious summons? Anything wrong? Are we ordered on active service?"

"Oh, dear no," said Drummond, taking the proffered hand; "but why don't you have a light?"

"Well, because I was so deucedly cold! My fingers are almost frozen. I daresay there are matches on the table."

He went on rubbing his hands, evidently expecting that his friend would perform the kindly office, and set light to the candles. And Drummond did light the candles, then went to the door, shut it, and turned the key in the lock. The sound of the click caused Jervis to raise his head with a start—"I say, old chap," he asked, "is something wrong?"

"My dear Phil," said the Adjutant, coming back to the hearth, and looking his brother officer straight in the eyes, "something is very wrong."

"Is it active service?"

"Active service? No. It is business of yours."

"Mine? Why, speak out, man. What are you hiding it for?"

"Well, old fellow," said the other, trying to break the news in as friendly a manner as possible, "the fact is, there is a devil of a row on, and you are mixed up in it. I sent for you, because, as your friend, I thought that you would rather come here of your own will than be brought."

"What the devil are you driving at?" asked Jervis, impatiently.

"I will tell you in time, but first let me tell you that I absolutely believe in you."

"Well, my dear Drummond, it is exceedingly kind of you. I should hope you did believe in me. But why the devil should you believe in me to-night more than any other night? And why should you bring me all the way from Ireland to tell me so?"

"Because if I hadn't brought you, somebody else would have done so, and I thought it would be more

pleasant to you. The fact is, my dear chap, there's a warrant out against you."

"Against me? Why, I don't owe twenty pounds in the world!" Jervis exclaimed.

"No, I daresay not; but it isn't a warrant for debt."

For half a minute there was silence, then Jervis gripped his friend's arm and held it hard. "Will you tell me the plain truth?" he thundered. "What is the warrant for?"

"For murder!" answered the other, steadily. "A girl called Katey Vincent was found in the river a day or two ago. She was last seen——" but there he stopped short, for Jervis had fallen to the floor in a dead faint.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE HORRID TRUTH.

"Dare to be true. Nothing can need a lie."

GEORGE HERBERT.

AFTER ten minutes or so, Phil Jervis, with a shiver and a shudder, came back once more to his own senses. "Hullo!" he exclaimed, putting up his hand and feeling that his face was all wet and splashed with the water which Drummond had thrown over him, "What the devil is up, Drummond, old chap? What are you looking so scared for?" He raised himself into a sitting position and held his hand to his head, for it was still whirling round and round like a teetotum.

"Get up and sit in the chair, old fellow," said Drummond, slipping his hand under his arm.

"Yes, thanks. But what happened? Did somebody knock me down? You didn't knock me down, did you?"

"No, I'm afraid you fainted, old chap," said Drummond, uneasily. He made an effort to raise him as he spoke, and Jervis helping himself somewhat, he was in another moment sitting in a chair hard by.

"I never fainted in my life," he remarked sturdily. Then a remembrance of what had caused him to go swinging down like a log or a stone came back to him, and he looked up at Drummond with wild, wide-open eyes. "My God! You told me something about Katey! Tell me again."

"I had so little to tell," said Drummond vaguely. "She was taken out of the river down at Ingleby."

"At Ingleby? Katey?"

"Well, that is what they say. She had a coat on with a Danford draper's name on it, and she had a letter in the pocket in your handwriting, and, of course, it is all come out now about her coming here to see you that night when you told the fellows it was your sister, and about your sleeping in Adams's room, and everything."

"Do you mean to tell me that Katey Vincent went away and drowned herself?"

"That is just what they don't know, old chap," said Drummond.

"She went away and drowned herself!" incredulously.

"Well, something like it. She is dead, anyway."

"Katey dead! Do you mean to say she has been in the river all these weeks?"

"Well, yes, I am afraid she has. They found her two or three days ago. In fact, the inquest was held this morning."

"Yes?"

"And it—of course, you know, old chap, I don't believe a word of it; and of course, in the natural order of things, perfect strangers to you, who have never seen you, don't regard you in the same light

that we do here; that is only natural. And, of course, it looks very black, and they seemed to think that you had every reason for getting her out of the road."

"My God! I had every reason for getting her out of the road! Of course I had! Do you think I wanted the fellows to see her here—the girl I was going to marry?"

"Of course, nobody knew you were going to marry her, did they?"

"But I knew, though she didn't. She—I'll tell you all about it. I was very fond of her—but I need not go into that now. It was like this. I used to say to her, as one says to so many girls, 'If ever you want a friend just come to me.' I meant it. God knows I meant it! And she took it seriously, and that night she came."

"She came here?"

"Yes, she came here, without any warning whatever, and when I came back from London, I found her sitting in this chair waiting for me. She said, 'Oh, Phil! Oh, Phil! I can't stand them any longer! I have come to you.' And I was very angry. Perhaps I ought not to have been, perhaps I ought to have taken her to some hotel or something, or to some of the married women. But I didn't. I was awfully angry. I told her it was such a mad thing to do, I told her it would set all the fellows talking, cast a slur upon us—I said anything, everything beastly I could think of—I was furious about it! And I told her plain and straight that she should not have come, that I wouldn't have her, that she'd got to go back. And she agreed to go back. I thought she saw how wrong she had been."

"Yes, but old chap, you didn't see her off."

"No, I didn't see her off, because when Tinker came and woke me the next morning she had gone."

"Do you mean she bolted?"

"Well, if you like to put it that way. But she had gone, and I thought she had seen the error of her ways, and that she had simply gone home by the earlier train. It never occurred to me that she would—oh, it's too horrible! I can't believe it! I won't believe it!"

"My dear chap, it's no use your saying you can't believe it. There she is, a poor bruised body, with its head battered in, lying in Sir Thomas Vivian's boat-house this very instant! And that is all that's left of Katey Vincent. I don't want to be unkind to you, old chap, but it's no use blinking the fact that there's her head smashed in—all the back of the head—and she couldn't have done it herself."

"Then who did?" asked Jervis. "Who that knew her here could have had any interest in harming her or getting her out of the road?"

"Well, of course," said Drummond, still speaking very uneasily, "of course, to the outside mind, to the mind of those who don't know you, it sounds like common sense to say that you had."

"I? But you don't think I murdered—that I killed a WOMAN?"

"No. Of course I don't. I told you when you came in that I implicitly believed in you. But then, I know you, but you can't expect the police, and outside people, and possibly even the girl's own relations, to look at the matter as I do. They think that you had every reason for getting rid of her. And, in fact, as I told you just now, there is a warrant out against you."

But to this announcement, Jervis was apparently quite indifferent. "Ah, well," he said, "they won't hang me without a certain amount of evidence. That doesn't make me uneasy. But to think that Katey is dead—drowned—that she has been in the river all these weeks—while I have been wondering and wondering where she was, what she was doing, whether

she had gone home without being found out, and thinking hardly of her because she never wrote a word! Oh, Drummond, it's horrid—it's horrid!"

For a few minutes there was a profound and uncomfortable silence. Drummond fidgeted restlessly about the room, and Jervis sat quite still, holding his head between his hands. At last, however, he looked up. "I shall never forgive myself for this, Drummond," he said, in a broken voice. "If I had been less fond of her it would not have happened, because I should have made her welcome enough that night when she came and threw herself on my protection. As it was, I only thought of her welfare, and that I was awfully angry, and I pitched into her right royally, poor little thing! I had never a thought of wronging her, and after I had given her some dinner, and we had talked things over a bit, and I'd got a bit less hard than I was in the first shock of finding her here, I quite thought she had fallen in with my views, and that she understood how utterly unwise she had been to her own interests. And now to find that she said good-night with *that* in her mind—going away to drown herself. It's horrible!"

"My dear Phil," said Drummond, quietly, "she never went away with any idea of drowning herself; of that you may be quite sure, because she didn't die by drowning. She died because somebody—who, yet remains to be proved—smashed in the back of her head with some heavy weapon."

With a start, Jervis came back to himself again. "Ah! So you said before," he said, vaguely; "so you said before. But that seems impossible—impossible—for the poor child didn't know a soul in the place but me, not a soul. She knew one or two of you other fellows it is true, but only as the merest acquaintances, and none of them suspected who was in the room that night, although they all knew that there was somebody, and somebody that I wished to

be treated as my sister, because I told them so. But surely, nobody out of mere maliciousness would kill a girl who had done nothing to them!"

"Well, dear Phil," said Drummond kindly, "that is a question which will be settled by and by. One thing is certain—that the poor girl is dead, and the inquest upon her this morning was adjourned until Thursday next. Meantime, it is no use blinding yourself to the fact that the gravest suspicion attaches itself to you in the matter, and for your own sake, you will have to be very careful what you say on the subject at all. Indeed, I advise you to say nothing whatever, to give no information, to stand strictly and entirely upon the defensive, and so avoid starting them all on a false scent."

"And perhaps let the real man go loose in trying to save my own skin? No, not if I know it!" said Jervis, indignantly. "Where a man has nothing to hide, he is a fool to try and hide it; and I am not going to do it, I'll be hanged if I will!"

The thought that flashed through Drummond's mind was that probably if he continued in his Quixotic attitude he would be hanged, and hanged in deadly earnest. However, it was no use trying to move him in his present frame of mind, so he did not give any outward expression to his thoughts. Jervis sat staring into the fire as if it was a road by which he could look along the whole of his future life. The charge which was hanging over his own head did not seem to trouble him—did not seem to affect him. He seemed in no way to fear or even to be made uncomfortable by the fact that probably this was his last night of freedom—at least, for some time to come. No, he just sat there, leaning his elbows on his knees, and his chin upon the palms of his hands, and stared and stared into the fire until Drummond could not bear to look at him. And so, the heavy minutes went over, and with every one, nearer came

the moment when the Inspector of Police would be there to fetch his prisoner.

"Old fellow," Drummond said, at last, "you know you can't sit here doing nothing."

Jervis looked up blankly. "And what is there to be done?" he asked.

"Well, of course, you know, I am sorry to say it, but first of all I've got to ask for your sword, and the Inspector of Police, who's got the affair in hand, may be here at any moment."

"Well, let him come. I don't mind," said Jervis, sturdily. Then suddenly he leaned back in his chair and looked up at his friend. "My dear old chap, you don't suppose that I, who know myself to be as innocent of wrong towards the little girl as you are, am going to put myself into a thoroughgoing funk because the police have got their suspicions of me? Heavens, no! I admit that on the first blush everything looks utterly black and against me, but although one is always hearing tales about innocent men being hanged, I, for one, don't believe in it. I was very angry with her—I had a right to be angry with her—any man who loved her would have been angry with her for doing such a mad thing! She is dead. She is gone. She will never trouble any of us any more, but, at the same time, as a man of the world, you must know perfectly well that it was a lunatic thing for her to do, and that I had a right to be angry with her. If I had known what was going to happen, why I should have done differently, but as things were I only did what I conceived to be the right thing. I have always kept fair and square as you fellows all know, as nobody knows better than yourself, and I had no fancy for a wife whose name would be smirched even in the smallest degree—be smirched even by a folly—and I say I had a right to be angry!"

"Yes, old chap, yes—yes—but, at the same time, there's a good deal to be done. You don't want to

sit still and let things happen as they will. You want to think of your own safety. You want to bring the real murderer to justice. There's a great deal to be done, and this is probably your last hour for following your own will exactly for some little time at least, and if there are any letters you would like to write, or any arrangements you would like to make, you had better write them, or arrange with me or some of the fellows to carry them out."

"No," said Jervis, "I don't want to write to anybody. I've got no near relations, and I can write to Lady Listower in a few days' time. By the bye, what have they been doing with my despatch box?"

"Oh, the Inspector sealed it up. He wouldn't break it open because—well—he wouldn't. You have no objection to his having the keys, I suppose?"

"Not the least in the world," said Jervis. "Why should I? I've got no incriminating evidence there, nor anywhere else, and the whole world is welcome to examine the stumps of my old cheques, and to read the few letters and bills they will find there. As to my sword, it is at your disposal—Hullo!" and he sat up suddenly into a listening attitude. "Who's that?"

Drummond walked to the door and opened it as the sound of heavy footsteps advanced towards them. Then Inspector Gallaghan, backed up by a policeman, appeared at the doorway. "Is Mr. Jervis returned, sir?" he asked.

"Mr. Jervis is here," said the Adjutant, quietly. Jervis got up, and the Inspector advanced into the room.

"I must ask you to consider yourself my prisoner, sir," he said to Jervis. "This is a very unpleasant duty to perform, but I will make it as little annoying as I can to you."

"Oh, that's all right. Don't say a word. I quite understand," said Jervis, at once dropping the blank

and vague manner which had so worried Drummond, and assuming his ordinary tone of superiority again. "No, you needn't read the warrant to me. It's quite right. I know all about it from my friend here. By the bye, I don't think we want your subordinate here. I shall not give you any trouble, or try to get out of this—I am a deuced sight too anxious to get to the truth myself!"

"I should warn you, sir, that whatever you say is liable to be used against you."

"Oh, yes, I know all that—Mr. Drummond here told me the same thing not half an hour ago; but I have nothing to hide, Inspector, absolutely nothing, and therefore nothing I say can possibly incriminate me. By the bye, I may as well give you my keys before we go. I suppose there will be no bail allowed at present?"

"I can't say, sir, I am sure. You see that's not a question for me to decide, but for the magistrates. We, of course, have our plain duty to do, and exceedingly unpleasant it is at times. I shall be glad of your keys. Thank you, sir. As Mr. Drummond would tell you, I didn't go to the extreme length in examining your rooms."

"I am really very much obliged to you, Inspector—though you might have done for anything I should have cared. When you come to consider a case of this kind it is certainly not for the most interested persons to try to throw obstacles in your way. By the way, I may as well take my luggage along just as it is—I suppose I may be some time kept down the town. Then it is no use waiting about. If I want anything from here I can easily send up for it."

So Phil Jarvis left his quarters—a free man no longer.

Drummond stood on the bear skin hearthrug without moving until the footsteps of the three

men had died away in the corridor. He heard them descend the stone steps, and then, after an instant's silence, heard the shutting of the cab door and the crunching of the wheels along the gravel. He was still holding Jervis's sword in his hand, and he looked round the cheerful room with a sort of blind, half-seeing foreboding of what might happen ere its master returned to it, if he ever returned to it again. As soldiers' rooms go it was a pretty room, with many bright pictures upon its walls, and many evidences of the popularity in which Jervis had always been held by the fair sex. A gay knitted rug of many colours was thrown over the leather-covered couch, an embroidered table-cloth covered the native hideousness of the lid of Jervis's travelling bath, making believe that three ornamental legs which were screwed into that useful article were really part and parcel of the same piece of furniture. Drummond wondered if the gay square of wrought silks was the work of the girl who was now lying at Ingleby, done to her death by the hand of a murderer. At all events, her portrait, in a pretty silver and tortoiseshell frame, was standing upon it, in close proximity to an old cloisonné jar which Jervis used for tobacco.

He turned round and looked at the chimney-shelf, where there was another and larger portrait of Katey Vincent, in a white and gold frame. There was no other woman's portrait in the room excepting a fine miniature, which he knew to be a portrait of Jervis's mother. The wide shelf, external to the regulation grate, was covered with a glittering pulkahri, and was littered with the usual ornaments which you find in a man's room. But there were only these two women's portraits—those of the girl who was dead, and the mother who had brought him into the world.

CHAPTER XV.

ALL THAT WAS LEFT OF HER.

“Face it out and live it down, whatever be the slander,
And walk on in wise quietness, as utterly unconscious.”

MARTIN TUPPER.

WHEN Phil Jervis found himself within the precincts of Blankhampton Gaol, he realised for the first time what his arrest really meant. It was then, of course, approaching midnight, so that he saw none of the chief officials of the prison until the following morning, when the Governor came to see him, and he preferred perhaps the strangest request that any prisoner suspected of murder ever put to his gaolers before.

“Look here, Captain Custance,” he said, after they had exchanged a salutation somewhat embarrassed on the side of the Governor, who disliked nothing more than to have a prisoner of his own class or from among his personal acquaintances, “I want you to do me a favour. I am told the inquest is adjourned until Thursday next, and that I shall see none of the magistrates until a couple of days at least, but I want to go and see Miss Vincent—all that is left of her, that is,” he added, in a lower tone.

The Governor of the gaol gave a start. “Oh, I wouldn’t think of that if I were you, Mr. Jervis, I really wouldn’t,” he said, hurriedly.

“But, my dear sir,” said Jervis, mildly, “I do think of it. I was very fond of that little girl. If she had lived, I should have married her, and it is a good deal owing to my blundering stupidity that she came to her terrible end——”

“I beg that you will not say anything of that kind

to me," the Governor interrupted. "You must not say one word to me, as your custodian, which will in any way incriminate yourself."

"My dear sir," said Jervis, "I shall say nothing to you that can possibly incriminate myself, because I have no guilt to hide. That she came to see me the night before it happened, and that I was exceedingly angry with her—— No, please, let me go on," he said, as the other was about to speak. "I am really quite aware of every word that I say—she came to me, and I was very angry with her. You would have been angry with a girl you were fond of if she came to your rooms at night, throwing herself on your protection, wouldn't you?"

"Yes, I should," replied Captain Custance, without hesitation.

"So was I—so was I! However, that is a fact that there is no getting over, and I shall not try to get over it. But, at the same time, I want to see her—you can manage it if you will. I don't care what means you take to prevent my escaping from your hands, and, of course, I will give you my word as an officer and a gentleman that I will not try to do so, but see her I must, unless I am forcibly prevented from doing so."

"It is very unusual," said the Governor, in a doubtful tone.

"I know it is very unusual. Are not murders always unusual? But you can manage it if you like. Where is she?"

"Well, I believe she was taken to the Parish Church at Ingleby last night, and in that case, of course, I should imagine that the coffin will have been closed."

"Yes, yes, but coffins can be opened again, and I am very anxious indeed to see her. I must see her, if it is in any way possible."

"Well, I can promise you nothing. In the first

place, her relatives may object. There are several of them here in the town, and they believe that you had a hand at her death, and they may absolutely refuse to let you see her, in which case, of course, you must rest content without doing so."

"Yes, yes, of course. And who else can object?"

"Well, of course, I should have to get a magistrate's order. As my prisoner, you see, of course, I am responsible for you."

"Well, Sir Thomas Vivian would give me that, I think. At all events you might try. I shall be eternally grateful to you if you will do so."

Eventually, Captain Custance promised to see what he could do during the morning, and indeed went so far as to promise to use his utmost endeavour to bring about the wish of his prisoner. "But you will be having your solicitors here during the day, of course?"

"My solicitors?" said Jervis. "Oh, I hadn't given them a thought! That will do very well to-morrow."

"But, my dear sir, there's no time to be lost," said the Governor. "In these matters every hour is of the utmost importance, and for your own sake, and for the sake of your relations and family, you should leave no stone unturned to prove your innocence."

"Oh, I am going to take every possible precaution. Don't worry about that," said Jervis carelessly.

"Are you going to employ a local firm?"

"I don't think so," he said, "I think I shall send a wire to George Winthrop presently. I have great faith in George Winthrop. And, by the bye, you might tell your people to get me some telegraph forms and paper, and that sort of thing—I suppose that I can have anything of the kind that I want?"

"Certainly, you can have everything except your liberty. You can be fed from your own mess if the rules of the mess do not forbid it, or from one of the hotels in the town. You can do exactly as you like.

You can refurnish this cell, and short of passing through the entrance gates, you are, for the present, your own master."

"That is good," said Jervis. "Well, then, do you for friendship's sake, and for pity's sake, contrive to bring about what I am so anxious to do during the day."

Now there is a great difference between one prison governor and another, and it is not your severe martinet who makes on the whole the best head for such an establishment. Captain Custance had received Phil Jervis's word of honour as an officer and a gentleman that he would not make any attempt to escape if he could arrange for him to see the body of the poor murdered girl, and so well did he work during the next two hours, that by noon he returned to Jervis's cell with the intimation that the relatives and Sir Thomas Vivian had alike given their permission for him to go down to Ingleby Church, and there see the body of the girl who was supposed to be his victim.

"Now, this is awfully good of you!" said Phil, with just a sign of a choke in his voice. "On my word, I will never forget it. If I can ever return you the kindness, I assure you I will do so."

"Oh, don't speak of it," said the Governor, kindly. "When I have a man of your position under my care—my equal, and whom I trust and believe to be innocent of such a charge as is hanging over you—it is a great satisfaction to me, however things go afterwards, to feel that at all events I have helped to make the way a little easier. In fact, I don't know that the position and equality make any difference in my feeling, and during the few times that I have been in charge of a man about whose guilt there could be no question whatever, I have always made it a rule to do everything that I possibly could to smooth things and show as little harshness as possi-

ble. With you, whom I know, and whom I really can't think for a moment to have done such a thing as this, naturally I do, and will do, everything that I possibly can to make you comfortable and to give you consolation. Don't say another word about it. I am only too glad to be able to help you."

Having got the permission of the relatives and magistrate that he should make this sad pilgrimage, it was a very short business to arrange for his conveyance to Ingleby Church and back again. Within half an hour of the news being brought to him by the Governor, a brougham drew up at the entrance to that part of the building in which Jervis's cell was, and immediately Jervis, wearing his ordinary clothes, and attended by a warder, got into the carriage. A policeman stepped up on the box beside the coachman, and they drew off at a smart pace for Ingleby Church. It was just half-past one when they reached the lychgate, where the three alighted, and walked quietly up the churchyard path to the chancel door, which was open. There were only two persons present in the church as they passed within the chancel entrance,—the undertaker, who had arranged the funeral, and a kind-faced, motherly woman, who had performed the last offices which can be rendered to any person in this world. The undertaker began to unscrew the lid of the coffin as Jervis, followed by the two officials, advanced towards him. The kind-faced, motherly woman was standing by, and a glance at the officer's drawn and quivering face, still ghastly white, as it had been the previous evening, when he had first heard the news, seemed to go right to her heart, and tell her that his was not the hand that struck the girl to her death. She drew a step nearer to him, and laid a work-worn hand upon his sleeve—"You knew the young woman in life?" she said, kindly.

Jervis turned and looked at her. "Yes, my good

woman, I knew her—and loved her,” he replied, dropping his voice over the last two words.

“You won’t expect to see her as she was, then. Poor thing, she is very much changed!” she said, in kindly, sympathetic tones. “I see a deal of these troubles, and I always take a pride in laying’em out as they’d like themselves to be, poor things! But I couldn’t do aught for her—she’d been so long in the water, poor girl, and water is terribly damaging to a corpse.”

The well-meant, but plain, practical, and matter-of-fact words struck Jervis with a horrible sense of chill. He suddenly began to feel that his head was going round—and round—and round. He did not answer her, but simply waited for the undertaker to finish his task. The warder and policeman moved away a step or two, and turned their backs towards him, and when the lid was raised, and the good woman had turned back the fleecy covering from the poor bruised and battered remains that lay within, it was only Jervis who really looked at them.

A great shuddering gasp broke from him as he realised that this crushed and battered wreck of humanity was all that was left of the once bright and buoyant girl whom he had used to call Katey Vincent. The face might have been the face of any one, known or unknown, and Jervis’s eyes were rivetted, not upon that, but upon the poor hands clasped meekly upon the quiet breast.

“Tell me,” he said, taking hold of the woman’s arm as she held her apron to her eyes, “tell me, do hands always look different when they are dead?”

“Mostly,” she replied.

“But they look so large,” he said.

“Ah well, you see she’s been in the water a long time.”

“But that wouldn’t make a difference to her hands?”

"Lor, bless you, sir, it makes a difference to everything. With her, poor dear, I doubt if her own mother would have known her, except by her pretty 'air. I combed that out and made the best of it when it got a bit dry, but it was sadly sodden, and I could do little or nothing even with that."

She had, however, plaited the beautiful chestnut tresses into two long braids, which reached nearly to her knees as she lay in her last sleep.

"I have seen enough, thank you," he said, putting a sovereign into her hand, "and I am most grateful to you for doing the best you could for her at last."

He turned quickly away, and walked straight up to the altar, and there he knelt down at the rail and bowed his head upon his hands. What thoughts ran through his mind, what tears fell upon the many-coloured pavement below, what wild regrets filled his heart, what black forebodings floated through his brain, none but himself knew. But there he knelt, the suspected murderer of the woman lying in her coffin, while those who had tended her, and those who were in charge of him, stood afar off, watching him with that pity which always recognises and respects real grief.

CHAPTER XVI.

JOHN SYLVESTER.

"Nor to understand a treasure's worth
Till time has stolen away the slightest good,
Is cause of half the poverty we feel,
And makes the world the wilderness it is."

COWPER.

THE two Atkinson girls—Jack and Jill—were still guests at Ingleby. Indeed, there had been no question of their leaving until their anxiety about the

inquest was over. Jill, whose head was still romantically full of Phil Jervis, admitted to Lady Vivian, with many sobs and tears, that she had never liked any man better in her life. "I don't pretend that I was in love with him, Lady Vivian" she explained, "but I liked him. I liked him with all my heart. He seemed to me so gentle and so honest and so straightforward. Oh!—you don't think that he could have done this dreadful thing? In your heart, you cannot think so."

"My dear, with all my heart I hope not," said Lady Vivian, in her kindest tones, "but as Sir Thomas says, one cannot help feeling a little doubtful about it."

Sir Thomas, as a matter of fact, had said nothing of the kind. Sir Thomas, on the contrary, did not feel doubtful at all, having made up his mind from the very first that Jervis, and none other, had struck the fatal blows. Lady Vivian, however, being the mildest, most generous, and least evil-thinking of women, translated Sir Thomas's somewhat truculent diatribes on the subject, and mildly watered them down to what was almost her own way of thinking—that is, that Jervis and everybody else was perfectly innocent.

"Oh, but Lady Vivian, you could not think—Believe me," the girl cried, suddenly changing her tone and taking up the subject at a fresh point, "believe me, that day when I told him that I had seen Katey Vincent the night before at the station, he looked me straight in the face, and said it couldn't be her!"

"Well, dear," said Lady Vivian, half-hesitatingly, "I don't know that that was very much in his favour, because it has been proved since that she was in the town, that she did go to his rooms that night."

"But do you think that if he had murdered her—killed her like an ox—hammered at her head, strik-

ing her from behind, taking the foulest advantage of her, that he could seem so utterly innocent as he did?"

"Well, dear," said Lady Vivian, deprecatingly, "of course, I don't say that Mr. Jervis did murder the poor little girl, or have anything to do with it, because I really don't know, and I like to believe the best of everybody, and especially of all my friends; but, at the same time, one cannot shut one's eyes to probabilities, or to facts, and, of course, you know, dear Jill, he did tell you that he couldn't believe she had been in the town—and, of course, that was really—it was really nothing more or less than a lie, because he knew that she had been. And, although, of course, it was very nice to try and screen her, still, I am sure if anybody were to ask me if I had seen somebody whom I had seen only the day before, I could not look that person in the eyes and pretend that I had not. Of course, dear, it is just as you happen to look at these things, but I don't think you must give him any credit for denying that the poor little girl had been to Blankhampton, and my dear child, although I am, as you know, most sympathetic to the love affairs of all my young friends, at the same time, I do hope that you won't allow your fancy in any way to be enslaved by this young man. According to what I hear to-day—according to what Sir Thomas has heard from the police people—and, of course, you know, Jill, it mustn't go any further—Mr. Jervis at once avowed that he had every intention of marrying her, that he was very angry with her because he thought she had no business to come without consulting him, even if she was unhappy with her own people; and there, I must say, that I think he was quite right. Still, he did intend to marry her, and he must have been exceedingly fond of her to say so."

"He cannot marry her, now," said Jill, in a choking voice.

Lady Vivian sat up with a start and a shiver.

"My dear Jill," she said, looking at her young guest, with her great ox-like eyes full of a nameless horror, "oh, my dear! You could not possibly be thinking—of any after contingency! Oh, my dear Jill, you have given me quite a shock."

"My dear Lady Vivian," said the girl, putting out her hand with a smile, "don't say that. I am not in love with Mr. Jervis, and I know that Mr. Jervis does not care twopence-halfpenny about me, but I knew Katey Vincent, and I have known him. He is nice—and I believe in him—and he is in trouble—and I should like to dress poor Katey's coffin and bier with flowers. I think he would like me to do it. I am sure he would like me to do it, and I should like to feel that I had done it for them both."

"That," said Lady Vivian, in a tone of much relief, "is a very beautiful idea, and, my dear, you are welcome to all the flowers that Ingleby can give you. Poor child! I only wish that Ingleby could have given her a shelter of a different kind to that which it has given her in the end. If only I had known what a foolish thing she had done, if only Mr. Jervis had thought of me, and thought of confiding the whole story to me, and simply driven her out that night, I would have taken the girl in with much pleasure, and have told her that she had done an impossible thing, that she must be wise, and content to go back to her own people until such time as her wedding could be arranged. Still, Sir Thomas says, if really the worst happens—" then she broke off, and looked at Jill with a vague distressed manner, which, however, could not be mistaken.

"Well, dear Lady Vivian, the worst did happen, since she got murdered. But I don't believe that he did it."

"I am afraid that most other people do, dear," was Lady Vivian's response.

"Yes, the world always thinks the worst," said the girl, a little bitterly, "but you don't think so. You know in your heart, and you want to believe what you know you ought to believe, that that young man is incapable of such an action."

"I hope he is—I trust he is," said Lady Vivian, earnestly, "I pray that he is, but only himself and One other really know it. We may never know—we may never arrive at the real truth. We can only leave these matters in the hands of Justice."

"And the hands of Justice," said Jill, reflectively, "are not always keenly sensitive to the touch. They say that blind people can see with their fingers, but nobody can say that of Justice. She is blind of eye and blind of touch also!"

"Let us hope not in this instance," said Lady Vivian piously.

Having received permission to deck the bier of the murdered girl with all the best flowers that Ingleby could produce, Jill Atkinson lost no time in taking advantage of the permission. She scudded off, armed with her hostess's authority, and interviewed the head gardener, who was less of a despot about flowers than most men would have been in his position, and possessing the powers with which he was vested by virtue of his office.

"Her leddyship says that you should have a great many flowers for the puir young lassie's coffin," he repeated, when Jill had explained her errand. "Certainly, Mem. I'll no spare them. I will just set twa of the laddies tae cut you a good basketful. Will ye hae them ta'en down to the kirk?"

"If you wouldn't mind," said Jill, who had, from her knowledge of other head gardeners, expected to be met only with black looks and grudging hands. "It is very good of you, Mr. Macpherson, not to mind all your flowers being taken."

"Oh, wha would grudge a few flowers for the like

purpose?" the Scot remarked, "mair particularly when we hae sae mony."

So, half an hour afterwards, Jill put on her hat, and with her sister for company, trudged off across the park to the church, whither the kindly woman had already preceded her. The coffin stood upon a bier in the middle of the chancel aisle, and was covered with a white pall, which had a long cross of gold passing the entire length of the coffin. So the two girls set the flowers here and there, made a bank of moss and bright flowers round the foot of the bier, outlined the cross upon the pall, refilled the vases of the church, and left one great posy, tied with a white ribbon, upon the head of the coffin. Upon one end of the ribbon was written in pencil, "In Memory of Katey Vincent, from her friend, Neville Prothero-Atkinson."

"I wouldn't leave any flowers loose upon the pall, miss," said the motherly woman, approaching her and speaking confidentially after she had closely examined her handiwork.

"Why not?" said Jill.

"Because I met Sir Thomas just now on my way here, and he told me that he had just given permission for the gentleman whom they suspect of having murdered her to come and see the body."

"To see her," said Jill, in a tone of horror. "But I thought she was——"

"Long past knowing, Miss," returned the woman promptly, "which was just what I said to Sir Thomas himself. But there, he says the gentleman is set upon it, and as Sir Thomas says, 'He's in bad enough case whichever it goes, and I'll not be the one to deny him that satisfaction,' and from what Sir Thomas said, he may be expected at any moment."

"Then let us go," said Jill to her sister.

"Yes, for goodness' sake, don't let us be here when he comes! It would be horrible!" returned Miss Jack, hurriedly.

With a last look the two girls made themselves scarce, and scurried away towards the Hall again, as if it were at all likely that they would meet Jervis coming by way of the park.

Later on, that is at three o'clock, which was the time fixed for the funeral, the whole of the ladies from Ingleby, dressed in mourning, attended the service which was held in the church. Of official mourners, there were of course some of the dead girl's relatives—the uncle, with whom she had lived, and his son, the John Sylvester of whom she had spoken in terms of such scorn and detestation during her ill-fated visit to Jervis's quarters. The appearance of father and son was very different. Mr. Sylvester himself was a middle-sized, fair-complexioned, slight man, who held his hat in front of his mouth, and wore a decorous expression suitable to the occasion. His son, who towered head and shoulders above his father, was a large-limbed, loosely-jointed, young man, fair, like his father in complexion, but with his heavy face swollen and blistered with the traces of recent grief, to whom the murdered girl had been everything—the love, if not of his youth, certainly of his early manhood. And to think that she had been, as he put it, befooled by another man, that she had left her home and the shelter of her uncle's roof for that of another, to which she had not been made welcome, held for him all the bitterness of death. So far from believing in the innocence of the suspected man, even in the possibility of his innocence, he had already, in his own mind adjudged him guilty, sentenced him to suffer the extreme penalty of the law, and had witnessed his execution. Between the paroxysms of his grief he had gloated in the fact that Jervis lay safely under lock and key, and only that morning, when his father told him that Sir Thomas Vivian had, subject to his approval, given permission that he should come from his prison to

pay a last visit to the girl who had loved him, his wrath and fury had known no bounds.

"You have given permission to let that scoundrel—that villain—that murderer—desecrate the poor remains of the victim whom he hounded to her death?" he broke out furiously.

"Well, how could I refuse it?" asked Mr. Sylvester, lifting his hands deprecatingly.

"How could you refuse? How could you grant it? Why, it's monstrous—it's monstrous! It's bad enough that one of our own flesh and blood, one whom we loved—" and here his voice broke piteously, "should have been done to death by the villain she trusted—" but there his voice failed him altogether, and he could not finish the sentence.

"My dear John," said Mr. Sylvester, in what he meant to be his most soothing tones, "if the poor little girl had stayed at home under the safe shelter of my roof, and had been content with that situation in life in which it pleased God to place her, nothing of this terrible affair could or would have happened. After all, for my part, I think it is more than doubtful that this young Jervis had anything whatever to do with the matter."

"Oh, you are too flabby for words!" cried John Sylvester, furiously. "You argue on in that cold-blooded, fishlike fashion, till I feel as if I should go mad amongst it all. Oh, it's nothing to you—nothing—nothing to you—but to me, she was everything in the world—everything on earth!"

"Yes, my dear boy, of course, I am very sorry that you feel so about your poor little cousin; but, at the same time, of course, you know, she didn't feel like that towards you. I——"

"Will you be quiet?" cried John Sylvester, passionately.

"No, my dear John, I don't think that, as your father, or as Katey's uncle, I am bound to be quiet at

all. And believe me, for your own good, what is the good of all your raging about a girl who deserted you and preferred another man to yourself? Be reasonable, my dear boy, be calm; be a man of the world, as I am——”

John Sylvester turned and looked at his father. “I think,” he said, slowly and heavily, “that you are not sorry to be relieved of the cost of keeping my poor darling.”

“Not at all, not at all. I have no such feeling,” said Mr. Sylvester, in a very self-righteous tone, “but, at the same time, the deed is done, and cannot be undone, and it is no use for you and me to put ourselves out about it. It is bad enough to have once’s niece murdered, and one’s name to be put in all the newspapers, and be generally branded with the disgrace of the whole business, as a return for all that I have done for her and given her. It is a subject on which I feel very strongly, John, very strongly.”

“Yes, and I feel strongly too,” John broke out, though with a different meaning to his father; “and if that chap gets off because of his position and his influence, I will hunt him down to the very death! I will avenge my poor darling, if my own life pays the forfeit.”

“My dear John,” said his father; “pray don’t take this melodramatic tone.”

“If it be melodramatic to feel with all your heart and soul, then I am melodramatic. If it is to feel with every fibre of your being that life is not long enough—that human power is not strong enough—that human opportunity is not wide enough to accomplish a certain end, then I am melodramatic,” John Sylvester thundered. “And I say, let Philip Jervis beware! If he slips through the fingers of Justice he shall deal with the iron hand of John Sylvester!”

And it was in this frame of mind that Katey Vin-

cent's nearest relations followed the dead girl to the grave.

It is strange how anything which savors of tragedy at once attracts crowds of those who constitute the general public. One would think that a girl who had been known but to two or three people in Blankhampton, and who could not have been of any interest to the townspeople, excepting by reason of her untimely death, might have been buried almost privately. But it was not so. The little country church was crammed almost to suffocation, and a still larger crowd waited in the churchyard the passing of the dead girl to the grave. Of course, there was intense interest to all in the sight of the two gentlemen who were known to be her nearest relations. The precise, well-dressed uncle, with his expression of decorous sorrow, and the tall awkward young man who bore the unmistakable traces of bitter and poignant grief. These two stood together at the foot of the bier, and for a few minutes John Sylvester was conscious of nothing but of the, to him, horrible sensation that every eye was fixed upon him. Then he became aware that a great wreath was laid at the foot of the coffin with Jervis's name attached to it. He gave a start as he realised with an indignant flash that this man had not only been allowed to see his cousin, but also to desecrate her last resting-place on this side of the grave with an offering of flowers. Yes, there it was, a great wreath of the loveliest white blossoms, and attached to it by a narrow white ribbon a card bearing in bold and unflinching handwriting the words "With bitterest regret and grief from Philip Jervis." The bunch of flowers which Jill Atkinson had laid on the head of the coffin had been removed to make way for the cross which was sent by Mrs. Sylvester, and a large wreath which had been given by some of Katey's girl friends in Danford. Whether by accident or design, of course John

Sylvester knew not, but Jill's posy had been placed in the centre of Jervis's wreath, and the long white streamer bearing her name hung immediately beside Jervis's card. John Sylvester wondered in a dull and dazed sort of way how it happened that Miss Atkinson had come to know of his darling's death. Then, by some instinct, he turned his head and saw her with tear-dimmed eyes sitting in the chancel seats on his right hand.

CHAPTER XVII.

VENGEANCE.

"Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the flood drown it; if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would be utterly contemned."

SONG OF SOLOMON.

WHEN the funeral was over, Mr. Sylvester immediately returned to Danford, giving as his reason the opinion that as the whole investigation was in thoroughly experienced professional hands, he could neither help nor hinder it by remaining personally on the spot. His task of identifying his niece by her clothing and general appearance was over, and also that of seeing her buried in a manner which would accord with his position in life. His son, however, absolutely and definitely refused to accompany him home.

"I don't care anything about the business," he said stubbornly, when his father represented that his presence was really needed at the manufactory which called them owners. "The business will get on very well indeed without me. If I went back with you, I should be of no use to anybody. If I stay here, I

may help to twine another strand round that fellow's throat!"

"I don't consider," said Mr. Sylvester, sententially, "that you are showing at all a proper spirit in this business, John. I admit that it is a very bad business, and a very unpleasant business, and one which never ought to have happened, but, at the same time, that bitter spirit of revenge is not for us. Justice will assuredly be done, if not in this world, in another, and I am not able to forget that if Katey had done her duty by me, as I have always done mine by her, it is a trouble which could never have come upon us, at least, not to the best of all human belief. This man whom she came to see, I must say I always thought him a very good fellow—a very good sort, and I have very grave doubts whether he has had a hand in it at all. He admits that he was very angry with her, and he had every right to be angry. If Katey had done such a thing to you, surely you would have been angry also?"

"Angry—I?" returned the other incredulously. He forgot, in that supreme moment of anguish, that he had in years gone by led this very girl for whom he was grieving a life little better than that of a dog! The young have easy memories—to wish with them is to act, and the wish to forget often brings forgetfulness with it. He only thought then, in a sudden access of tenderness, that if such an unlikely thing had ever happened as that, Katey, who had during the last few months said "No" to his suit over and over again, should have flown from the unhappiness of her domestic situation, and come casting herself upon him for protection and joy, how differently he would have received her! It was incredible to him that Jervis, who admitted loving her, could have been angry and roundly scolded her and chidden her for casting herself upon his mercy! Such a forgetfulness of self was beyond John Sylvester's ken. He

could not understand it, because, in his own case, he would have felt no scruples for the sake of Katey's good name.

"I remain here until the end," he said, shaking himself together out of the sweet seductiveness of contemplating that impossible contingency. "I am sorry if you find that you miss me, but I assure you, I should be of no use to you whatever."

"Very good, very good," said Mr. Sylvester. "I have no desire to coerce you, John, one way or the other. If you prefer to remain here, brooding over what can never be undone, I will not thwart you. You have had your own way all your life until now, and I shall not attempt to coerce you at your time of life. Then you will remain here? In this hotel?"

"I think so. It is very convenient," said John, who did not care in the least what roof sheltered him so long as he was within reach of Blankhampton Gaol.

There was a train leaving Blankhampton for London soon after five o'clock, and it was by this that Mr. Sylvester travelled for the first part of his journey home. John dutifully went with him to the station, and saw him into a comfortable carriage, got his newspapers, and saw that he had a foot-warmer, and stood with his elbow on the door laboriously making small talk as people do during the last five or ten minutes before a train sets off on its journey; and at last, to the relief of both father and son, the engine gave a shriek and a snort and glided gently out of the station.

Then John Sylvester was free to go back to the hotel and set himself to follow the trail of Katey Vincent's untimely end like a veritable sleuth-hound. He had not very much work to occupy his thoughts, for the winter dark was already closed in upon the scene when he was free to follow his bent. He wandered round to the police station in search of Inspec-

tor Gallagher, but only to find that he was not there. Then he began in a mild and gentle sort of way to talk over the case with the Inspector in charge, and to the no little disgust of that august personage, who believed in the police keeping themselves to themselves, and in the public—even though the individual member then troubling him might happen to be one nearly interested in the case—keeping their place, and leaving the work to be done by those who, according to him, do it the best.

Discouraged in this quarter, John Sylvester strolled through the town as far as the Cavalry Barracks, and asked a simple question or two of the corporal of the guard, who was standing in the verandah leading to the guard-room. Out of him the poor young fellow got even less satisfaction than he had done at the police station, for it happened that Jervis was as popular with the ranks of the White Horse as he was with his equals, and not a single man from one end of the regiment to the other was there who would have helped by so much as a word of disparagement to put the rope more securely round his neck. Up to a certain point, the landlord had been more than willing to discuss the latest exciting topic of the neighbourhood, but in the experience of all people there comes a time when the murder of an utterly unknown young woman loses its charm and interest. As a matter of fact, the landlord had several grown-up daughters of his own, and was of opinion that this girl could not have been of much good. He, in truth, thought that it fell exceedingly hard upon Mr. Jervis, and still even more hardly upon Mr. Sylvester, her uncle. Of course, he was very pleased to have a well-to-do-guest remaining for an indefinite length of time, but when John Sylvester desired to go anew into all the ghastly details of his cousin's death, and to utter dark threats of vengeance against a man who was already held fast in the

clutches of the law, then Mr. Clark began to think that it was a great pity that he had not gone home with his father.

"I don't think, sir," he said rather shortly, as he stood watching young John helping himself to Stilton cheese, "that you need trouble any more about that part of the business. Of course, it is very sad for the young lady to come to such an end, and as I made so bold as to remark to your father, it is a pity she didn't value a good home when she had it! But what is done is beyond undoing, and from what I hear, I am bound to say, public opinion runs very high in favour of Mr. Jervis. You see, he is well liked in the place."

"Yes, I daresay he is. He is just the sort of specious brute that would be well liked!" said John, as he buttered a biscuit.

"Well, of course, everybody has a right to their opinion, Mr. Sylvester, but he is safe in Blankhampton Gaol, and the law must take its ordinary course. Depend upon it, sir, that the detectives will follow up the trail without you and me putting a finger to it."

"But I mean to stop and see the whole business through," said John in his most determined tones.

"Much better not, sir," said the landlord rubbing the palms of his hands together, "you may only hinder the detectives from doing their best work, and so defeat your own purpose. Depend upon it, detectives who are used to this kind of business go their own way to work, and they work the better when they have not been interfered with; and if I was you, sir, I should just go home and keep quiet."

"I can't do that," said John. "I can't do that. I should go mad if I didn't stop here—if I wasn't on the spot. Depend upon it, there's more to come out, Mr. Clark, depend upon it there's more to come out than any one in Blankhampton thinks of at present."

"Well, that is as it may be, Mr. Sylvester—that is as may be. I can't say that I hope there is, because I should be sorry to think that an officer and a gentleman should so far forget himself as to lift a hand against a woman! I have always had a great respect for the officers at the barracks, and I don't like to think that such a thing is possible. However, it will all come out. Murder will out, sir—murder will out!"

"Ah, but a good many times murder will not out," said John, in an argumentative tone.

"Well, sir, I hope the truth will come out in this instance, whoever suffers from it; but it's a thousand pities the young lady didn't know when she was well off, and as a man with grown-up daughters of my own, I think it is an opinion that will be shared by most of those who have no connection whatever with the trial."

He bustled away then, and John Sylvester sat for a long time leaning his head upon his hand, and brooding over the events of the past week. He felt that it was no use talking to any of these people—they were all stupid, and indifferent, and cloddish! It was nothing to them that the sweetest girl in all the world had been done to her death by the heavy hand of a villain!

It was nothing to them that the one love of his life was lying in her desolate grave, struck down in the very flower of her youth, sent to her last account, with a heart full of bitterness and disappointment. No, it was nothing to such as these nerveless, pulseless blockheads! They had got Jervis safe, it was true, and having done that much, they never seemed to think that it could be necessary to follow up the trail swiftly and relentlessly. They never seemed to think that Jervis was rich—or if not rich, at least sufficiently well off to call to his aid the very best brains and the widest legal experience that the

country could produce! John Sylvester felt impotent with blind rage, knowing as he did that Jervis's lawyers might bring a thousand quibbles to bear upon the case which would be the means of freeing him and letting him go scot-free of this wicked and damnable murder! So they rested idly on their oars, secure in the bare fact that the suspected man was a prisoner within the walls of Blankhampton Gaol, instead of searching and seeking everything out by following up every tiny scent, until a chain of evidence was forged which would fasten the crime irrevocably and irretrievably upon its perpetrator! It never entered his mind that possibly the detectives were following such a course, and that in addition to the qualifications of swiftness and relentlessness, which he had told himself were necessary for the safe following of such a trail, they also added another—that of silentness. Poor John Sylvester! He did not see very far. On the contrary, indeed, and as he dashed out into the brilliant moonlit night, with the myriad stars of Heaven all corruscating the frosty sky, his only thought was that everybody connected with the case was an utter fool, and that he was the only man in the whole world to whom the truth really mattered!

Somehow his impatient feet led him along the hard road towards Ingleby, and so, under the rising moon, he tore along, full of energy and dogged strength. He presently found himself leaning over the lych-gate of Ingleby Churchyard. He tried to enter, but it did not yield to his touch, and so he leant against the iron palisades which enclosed the pretty churchyard, and all his broken, yearning heart went out to that little grave which he could so plainly see in the brilliant white light streaming down from Heaven, and stretching out his arms towards it, he cried to the still frosty air—"Katey! Katey! You passed me by, but I—will—follow—your—fate to the very blow

which took your life!" Then a mist of tears shut out the picture, and a swift black cloud swept across the moon.

CHAPTER XVIII.

GEORGE WINTHROP.

"We should always keep a corner of our heads open and free, that we may make room for the opinions of our friends."

JOUBERT.

WHILE John Sylvester was arguing with his father as to whether he was or was not sufficiently distressed by his niece's sad death, Phil Jervis was occupied in writing an elaborate telegram to George Winthrop, the great criminal lawyer, whose help he wished to secure. Immediately on his return to the prison from his pilgrimage to Ingleby Church, he had received a visit from his friend Drummond, who told him amongst other things that Katey's uncle and her cousin, John Sylvester, were in the town.

"Of course, old chap, everything has been kept very dark," he said, "and although it is true what you say, that where a man has nothing to hide, nothing can be brought to light, still, at the same time, if I were you, I should make no delay in getting George Winthrop to your assistance at once. From what I have gathered this morning, and I have not been idle in your interests, I believe that this cousin, Sylvester, who is an out-and-out lout, who would stick at nothing, is fearfully cut up at the young lady's death, and means by hook or by crook to fasten it upon you. I should not say this outside, of course, because it wouldn't do, but it is about the gist of what I have gathered."

"Oh, let me see. John Sylvester?" said Jervis, in a meditating tone. "Yes, he wanted to marry her, I believe. A year or two ago he was a perfect young brute towards her, and took elaborate pains to make poor little Katey hate him like poison. Then he suddenly turned round and began to make equally obnoxious love-making to her. She couldn't bear him. She refused him over and over again, and from what she told me, I believe his people were rather pleased than otherwise that she did so."

"You see," said Drummond, who felt each moment more and more anxious to be up and doing instead of letting the time slide by as Jervis seemed inclined to do, "you see, he blames you for his repeated rejections, and, of course, as the girl deserted them all to come to you, he naturally bears you no good-will."

"Oh, poor chap, no—he's right enough," said Jervis indifferently.

"Yes, he is right enough, but from what I can gather," said Drummond, speaking in very decided accents, "this chap don't care much whether it is right or wrong. He wants to make you suffer. He wants to be revenged on you. He is like a bloodhound on a trail, but unlike the real article, he will work his trail round to you whether truth leads to it or not."

"No," said Jervis, "impossible. It can't be done. However, I have got no desire to be hanged, I assure you, Drummond, and although I am not in a funk, as you can see for yourself, at the same time I am going to take every precaution for my own safety. I will send a wire to Winthrop now. Perhaps you will send it off for me."

"I will, with pleasure," said Drummond, in a tone of much satisfaction. Thereupon Jervis sat down at the table, and wrote out a message to the great lawyer. It was long for a telegraphic message, but nat-

urally short for the details of the case. It was urgent in tone, and begged him to come down without the delay of an hour.

Now, of course, this atrocious murder had already found its way into the London papers, and when the great criminal lawyer received Jervis's telegram, he made up his mind to go down to Blankhampton that same evening. "This seems to me," he said to his partner, "a very pretty case. It is, as this Jervis himself says, all very black against him, but he, even in the telegram, protests his innocence, and asks me to come without an hour's delay. I shall go down by the seven o'clock train."

The great lawyer was not married, and to send a clerk back to his house for a portmanteau, and to give his servant instructions that he was going North that night, and might not return for several days, was the work of but a few moments. He dined early at a noted restaurant near to his offices, and when the seven o'clock train started for London he was one of its passengers. As he did not reach Blankhampton until after midnight, Mr. Winthrop naturally did not see his client that evening, but soon after nine o'clock the following morning, he was shown into his cell.

"You have seen the papers, of course?" said Jervis, when they had shaken hands.

"Yes, I have seen them. In fact, I have looked carefully over the local papers this morning," Mr. Winthrop replied, "but what I should like you to do would be to simply sit down and tell me, without reserve, from beginning to end, everything that you believe will bear in any way upon the case. I need hardly tell you that in cases of this kind there is always the grave danger of things going the wrong way, which, I take, is what you particularly wish to avoid."

"Yes, I do, of course," said Jervis, "but, at the same time, I am hardly disturbed by my situation

here, because I feel certain—except by the most far-fetched circumstantial evidence—such a crime could never be really attributed to me.”

“No. Well, that is scarcely the question. I should like to hear from you the story of your entire acquaintance and connection with this Miss Vincent. In the first place, have you got any of her letters?”

“I have in my quarters, unless the police have taken them.”

“Nothing that you would not care for the whole world to know?”

“Not the least in the world. I was only very anxious that the world should know nothing of her visit to me last November, and I did everything I could to hide it, both when she was in my quarters and after she had left there. However, I will tell you all about it—from beginning to end.”

Such a story, of course, was not very quickly told. Jervis talked on and on—it seemed for hours—and the great lawyer sat quietly listening, smoking cigarette after cigarette the while, and taking an occasional note.

“You really meant to marry her?” he said, at last, when Jervis had brought his story right down to the point of leaving her for the night in his rooms.

“Of course, I did,” said Jervis. “I told her then that I didn’t mean to marry her. I—well, on my word, Mr. Winthrop, I really don’t know what to say. I was furiously angry, because, you know, without being at all hypocritical or wanting to cry myself up, or anything of that kind, I have been square—I have always kept straight—I never had any fancy for anything underhand——”

He broke off short there, for a memory of Mrs. Paget flashed through his mind, as he remembered that perhaps he had been nearer to something underhand in her case than he had ever been in the whole of his life.

"What have you got in your mind?" said the lawyer, looking at him gravely and quietly.

"Oh!" with a laugh that was but half a laugh; "another matter altogether. Nothing to do with this poor little girl at all."

Then he told of how he had been roused by his servant to find that Katey had flown during the night or in the early morning, and what tortures he had suffered at her silence. How he had wondered and wondered whether she had got safely home, and whether her absence had been remarked. How, in his own mind, he had upbraided her for her cruelty in leaving him in this dire and dreadful suspense. Then how he had taken that almost surreptitious journey to Danford, and how he had not liked to call at the house, because he could see no sign of her presence therein.

"It is a pity you took that journey," said the lawyer, quietly.

"Yes, as things have turned out now, of course it is a pity; but how was I to know? I never dreamed—I never thought—that she was lying in the river all the time, with her head battered in! No. Oh—how could I, how could I?"

"No, exactly," said the lawyer, "but we have got to make the jury believe that, you know. Pity, as you did go, you didn't call at the house openly."

"Yes, I have felt that since. I suppose that is the weakest point in my case?"

"Well, I am afraid it is," the lawyer admitted. "However, that need not necessarily be a very serious point. Now, tell me all that you know of Miss Vincent's family—of her people, particularly of this John Sylvester, who, by the bye, is staying in the same hotel that I am."

"And whom I am told," said Jervis, "is very bitter against me. I don't know how far it may be true, or what it may be worth, but one of my brother officers

was here yesterday, and he told me that this John Sylvester was so thoroughly set against me, by way of blaming me for his own rejections, that he is determined to fasten the crime upon me by hook or by crook. I believe he is staying here with that sole object."

"Ah, well, you need not worry about him. An amateur detective with a grievance which makes him look at everything with a prejudiced and jaundiced eye is not the most dangerous person to think of in a case like this. I don't suppose that we shall be able to pull you through just yet—the Coroner's jury will have to have their say, and their say is not always remarkable for its intelligence. If the magistrates in this part of the world are very enlightened people, it is just possible we may get them to see things in a better light. If not, you will have to possess your soul in patience until you are really tried."

"I suppose here I shall have to stay," said Jervis.

"Yes, I am afraid you will. You see, a murder case is a murder case after all. I suppose you couldn't give me any idea of a more likely reason for this murder than appears on the first blush?"

"No, I have not the very slightest notion why anybody on earth should have troubled to do her any injury. She was as open as the day—much too open for her own safety. So far as I was ever able to gather she had no history beyond the fact that she was left an orphan young, and entirely dependent upon the Sylvesters. On the whole I believe they made things rather rough to her—that is to say, although it was a large, handsome house, and they were rich people, living in a very good position, I fancy they always made her feel her dependence very much—in fact, she has told me so many times. But I am bound to confess, although I went to the house a good deal when I was quartered in Danford, that I

never saw any difference between her treatment and that of a daughter. I believe it was more in pin-pricks than in great matters, and that the chief trouble of all was the love-making of this cousin, John Sylvester. Still, I cannot think why anybody should have murdered her. The more I think about it the more addled I get, and the less I feel able to arrive at any satisfactory conclusion—even in my own mind."

"I suppose no chance of this John Sylvester being the culprit?"

"I can't say, I am sure. You see he didn't know that she had come to Blankhampton."

"How do you know that?" said the lawyer. "If he knew she had come to you, and he had waited about until he saw her come out of the barracks alone, you have no idea what happened."

"No."

The idea put a new notion into the brain of both, and presently the lawyer betook himself away, going back to the hotel, where he ordered lunch to be served in the coffee room.

Mr. Winthrop spent the time before the waiter came to tell him that his lunch was ready writing a long telegram to his partner in town. There was a telegraph office in the hall of the hotel, and the lawyer handed it in on his way to the coffee room. The head-waiter met him at the door. "I am very sorry, sir, not to be able to give you a table to yourself," he murmured apologetically. "You see, sir, you didn't tell me that you would be lunching here."

"It is of no consequence whatever," said Mr Winthrop, good-naturedly.

"I am very glad of that, sir. If you are dining here to-night, or lunching in the morning, if you will let us know when you go out, a table shall be reserved for you."

"Oh, thanks very much. No, I won't tie myself. I shall be here to-night, but you need not keep me a table. Ah, thanks," as the waiter indicated the chair which he was to occupy.

A little to his surprise he found that he was placed at the table where young John Sylvester was also having lunch. He did not know, of course, that a very handsome tip had passed between the young gentleman and his friend, the head-waiter, in order that he might be placed at that particular table. On the whole, the great lawyer was not sorry to have the opportunity of passing the time of day with one so nearly interested in the case which he had just taken up, and when John Sylvester passed him the salt, although he had one at his left hand, and also the wine list, he thanked him very cordially, and quite naturally slipped into conversation about the weather and other subjects equally indifferent to both of them. At last, by considerable dexterity, John Sylvester brought the conversation round to the tragic death of his cousin.

"You are a stranger in Blankhampton?" he asked, as a sort of feeler to George Winthrop's position.

"Yes. I have been here before, some years ago, but as you see I am comparatively a stranger here."

"Then you have perhaps not heard about the murder which took place here the other day?"

"Yes, I saw it in the papers this morning," said Mr. Winthrop, civilly.

"And what do you think about it?" the young man asked, leaning his elbows on the edge of the table, and staring hard at the impenetrable face of the lawyer.

"Oh, well, it is rather early days to judge yet. I should say that Mr. Jarvis had nothing to do with it."

"Ah, you would think so," John Sylvester rapped out, injudiciously.

Mr. Winthrop looked up and stared at him, coldly, for a moment. "You know me?" he remarked, in an emotionless voice.

John Sylvester reddened a little. "Yes—that is to say, these people here told me something about it."

"Oh," said the lawyer, in a comprehensive tone. "But what made you say that, of course I should believe in him?"

"Oh, well, of course, it is to your interest to do so," John Sylvester stammered.

"I see. But you don't suppose, surely, that a man of my position would take up a case of this kind unless he did believe in his client?"

"Oh, of course not," said John, "of course not."

A dry smile curled the clean-shaven lips of the great lawyer, and he helped himself to another potato before speaking again. "You, of course, are a very much interested party in this case. You see, I know who you are."

"I think I may say that I am the person most interested in my cousin's murder," said John Sylvester, with an attempt at dignity, "and because I had a very great affection and regard for her."

"Oh, yes, yes. You wanted to marry her, didn't you?"

The younger man flushed angrily. "Yes, sir, I did want to marry her—and let me tell you, if she had taken me instead of giving all her love to the scoundrel who——"

But here the lawyer put up his hand. "I cannot let you speak of my client in those terms," he said, quietly. "To me, Mr. Jervis is absolutely innocent—as innocent as I hope, and I may say as I believe, you to be."

For a moment John Sylvester turned deathly pale. Then the hot blood flushed into his face, and the veins of his temples seemed to stand out like cords.

For a moment Mr. Winthrop thought that he was going to break his plate over his head or throw a knife at him, or something preposterous of that kind. Then he mastered himself by a violent effort, and said, in a constrained and formal voice, "Mr. Jervis is very fortunate to have secured an adviser who does really feel as you say you do. I congratulate him with all my heart."

To which the great lawyer bowed simply, and suffered the remark to pass unchallenged.

CHAPTER XIX.

LINKS IN THE CHAIN.

"The words of men are like the leaves of the trees."

STEIGER.

MR. GEORGE WINTHROP remained in Blankhampton until the inquest was over, nor did he spend the time which thus passed without profit either to himself or his case. He both dined and lunched at the Barracks with Jervis's brother officers, and together with an eminent detective who came at his summons from London, he closely and exhaustively went into the evidence which could be gathered within the Barrack gates concerning what had happened on the eleventh of November. They traced the cabman who had taken Katey from the station to the Barracks. He pumped Tinker so thoroughly and so cleverly that the man had not another word to say on the subject. They examined every drawer, box, paper, book, and article of clothing of which Jervis possessed. They examined the supposed scene of the murder and all the poor little belongings that were in the possession of the police, having been taken off the dead girl's body,

and at last the day of the adjourned inquest arrived, and great was the excitement of all classes of society in Blankhampton and its neighbourhood. In fact, it may truly be said that Jervis himself was the only cool and composed person in the town.

The inquest was fixed to take place at twelve o'clock, and two hours before that time Drummond and another officer arrived at the gaol to assure Jervis that they and every other officer in the regiment steadfastly believed in him.

"We shall come down, old chap, to support you, of course," Drummond said, laying his hand on Jervis's shoulder.

"Now that is awfully good of you, Drummond," said Jervis, visibly brightening. "That is really awfully good of you, because although I am not in the least uneasy about the ultimate result, at the same time one likes to feel that one's friends are standing by one. But don't you stay here with me all the time. If you turn up at the place itself, that will more than satisfy me. I suppose you are off duty?"

"Oh, yes, but we kept on uniform, thinking that it would get us admission into the room. Well, then, we will be there without fail at a quarter to twelve."

"All right!" said Jervis, cheerfully.

They had scarcely gone before one of the warders brought him a batch of letters. The first one was from his friend, Mrs. Paget, assuring him of her absolute belief in his innocence, and adding that even if it did go against him, she for one should always consider him perfectly justified. "When one thinks of the way in which that wretched girl hunted you down, my poor Phil," she ended, "it makes one ready to excuse anything and everything." This precious effusion Phil Jervis tossed contemptuously on the table, then opened the next one that came to hand. He had received hundreds of such letters during the past few days, until, indeed, he had half whimsically

petitioned the Governor of the gaol to allow him to have a clothes basket in which to throw them. They were all the same—from all classes and conditions of people with whom he was on terms of more or less intimacy. The last one, however, was signed “Your sincere friend, Jill Atkinson,” and that he read with the closest interest. It was dated from Ingleby, and began “My dear Mr. Jervis.” Then went on to say, “You will perhaps think it strange that I am writing to you, but before the final inquest is held, I would like to send you my good wishes and assurances of my belief in your complete innocence. Your friends at Ingleby have been thinking a great deal of you these last few days. Lady Vivian, although made a little doubtful by Sir Thomas’s diatribes on the subject, really looks upon you as a most illused person, and makes excuses for you all day long. I was afraid at one time that I should have to give evidence in the case, because I told Sir Thomas, as soon as he described poor Katey to me, that I had seen her soon after my arrival here in Blankhampton station. That was before it was in any way thought probable that you might have had to do with it. However, they have got me out of that, because the cabman who drove her to the Barracks is sufficient to prove that she did come to Blankhampton on that day, and that she did drive straight to your quarters. Knowing Katey as well as I did, I can only say that to me it is inexplicable that she should have done such a mad thing! It is still more strange that anybody in Blankhampton could have wanted to murder her, and I have more than a suspicion that she was really followed from Danford and killed in a fit of passion. However, I have not ventured to speak of this outside, or indeed to anybody but yourself. I shall be very, very anxious until I hear how things have gone with you. Lady Vivian insists upon our staying here until all anxiety is finally at an end. With once more

my very best wishes, Your sincere friend, Jill Atkinson."

That letter Jervis replaced in its envelope and thrust into the inner pocket of his coat. How well he remembered her telling him that she had seen Katey in Blankhampton station! And how she had stuck to her point, although he had boldly, in Katey's interests, declared that it could not have possibly been her. It was certainly very nice of her to write encouragingly to him just before his undergoing the trial of appearing in public with so foul a suspicion hanging over him. He felt himself twice as good a man when he stepped into the carriage which was to convey him to the scene of the inquest, which was, as a matter of fact, held in the best room of the principal inn at Ingleby.

He was not then treated as a culprit, but sat next to his solicitor at the long table, and save that a policeman was seated behind him, nobody would have suspected that he was not free as air to go wherever he would. Slowly, piece by piece, the evidence against him was built up, and really, before the case was half through, appearances against him were so black, so convincing, that positively Jervis began to ask himself whether it was not possible that he had, during a temporary mental aberration, really done the deed. Every now and then George Winthrop got on to his feet, and put in an awkward question, more especially when Mrs. Sylvester appeared, wearing somewhat deep mourning, and a very rueful expression of countenance, and gave evidence as to the clothing which had been taken from the body of the deceased girl.

"You will swear that that ulster belonged to your niece?" he asked.

"Yes."

"And also the hat?"

"Yes, my niece was wearing a hat like that."

"And you will swear to the dress?"

"No, I won't swear to the dress. I have never seen my niece wear a dress like that."

"And to the boots? Do you know what size boots your niece wore?"

"No," said Mrs. Sylvester. "I don't."

"You never heard your niece mention the size of boot that she wore?"

"No, never."

"Had she a small foot?"

"Not a large one."

"Can we learn the size of her foot at her boot-makers?"

"You might do so."

"What size gloves did your niece wear?"

"I really don't know."

"Had she a larger hand than you?"

"I think not."

"What size gloves do you take yourself?"

"Six and a half."

"And you think your niece had a larger hand than yourself?"

"No, I think not. I think it was smaller."

"Do you recognize this garment as having been worn by your niece?"

"No."

"Do you think that your niece had any such garment as that?"

"She certainly had similar garments, but I don't recognize that one."

"You knew that your niece was engaged to Mr. Jervis?"

"No, certainly not."

"You knew that there was an intimacy between them?"

"I knew nothing of the kind."

"You knew that your niece was admired by your son?"

"Yes."

"And that she rejected him?"

"I believe she did."

"You knew that she did?"

"Yes, if you put it like that, I know that she did."

"You were not pleased that your niece did reject your son?"

"In one sense I was extremely glad that she did so."

"But not in another?"

"Well, perhaps not."

"Had you reason to believe that she was not happy in her home?"

"None at all."

"You gave her every liberty?"

"Certainly."

"The same as you would have done to your own daughter?"

"If I had had one, yes."

"You were never harsh with her?"

"Not particularly so."

"You have been at times?"

"Yes, at times I have found fault with her."

"You were not surprised when you found she had left home?"

"Yes, I was very much surprised."

"Did you try to trace her when she disappeared so mysteriously?"

"My husband did."

"You did not?"

"No, my husband did."

"You were very anxious about her, I suppose?"

"Of course, I was exceedingly anxious."

"And your son?"

"Yes, my son was very anxious also. We were all anxious."

"And you believe that your niece had rather a small foot?"

"Yes."

"Not a foot that would require a number five boot?"

"No! Certainly not!"

"Was she penniless?"

"My niece had no property of her own."

"How did she provide for her clothing?"

"Because she had an allowance."

"I see. Was it an allowance suitable to her position?"

"It was an allowance suitable to my husband's position, or we thought so."

"How much did your husband allow her?"

"Fifty pounds a year."

"Then you don't know whether she was in the possession of money when she disappeared?"

"I should say that she was, because her allowance had been paid very shortly before that. It was paid four times a year."

"I see. And you think she had not spent much of it?"

"I think not."

"You would not have objected to a marriage with Mr. Jervis?"

"Certainly not. On the contrary, we should have been pleased. But Mr. Jervis, although he came to my house fairly often, gave me no indication that he had any idea of marrying my niece."

"I see. I think that will do, thank you."

Mr. Winthrop sat down with an air of much satisfaction. Jervis wondered what in the world he could have in his mind, but having great faith in him, forebore to ask a question, even by a look.

Mr. Sylvester and his son both spoke to the identification of the body, and none of George Winthrop's dry and caustic questions sufficed to shake them on that point. Then followed the cabman, Tinker, and several officers of the White Horse, when the fact of Miss Vincent's arrival in Blankhampton and her con-

veyance to the Barracks, her reception by Tinker, her refusal to leave, although Mr. Jervis was not yet returned from London, and his subsequent arrival and annoyance were all duly chronicled in detail. The effect of all this upon Jervis himself was most peculiar. He could scarcely realise that these people were all talking about himself, and he was struck with admiration by the clear and concise way in which Tinker gave his evidence. Most soldier servants, devoted to their master as he was, would have done more harm than good by protesting anything rather than the truth, but Tinker was open, clear, concise, and, from time to time, exceedingly amusing. Said that he knew Miss Vincent by sight, and recognised her when she first arrived asking for Mr. Jervis. As she declared her intention of awaiting his arrival, he permitted her to remain in his master's sitting-room. Admitted that it was not an unheard of thing for a lady to pay such a visit as that, but stoutly maintained that it was the first time, during the whole time that he had acted as Mr. Jervis's servant—now over four years—that such a thing had happened to him.

"You are quite sure of that?" said the lawyer who was watching the case on behalf of the Sylvester family.

"Yes, sir, I am quite sure of that," Tinker answered, looking his questioner straight in the face.

"But you have known other officers have lady visitors?"

"A good many times, sir," answered Tinker, promptly.

"You never saw Miss Vincent in barracks before?"

"Never, sir."

"Not at Danford?"

"Never, sir, to the best of my belief."

"She was never in Mr. Jervis's rooms at Danford?"

"She was once in Mr. Jervis's rooms at Danford."

"But you said that Mr. Jervis never had lady visitors?"

"I mean to say, sir, lady visitors who came by themselves. When the regimental sports took place at Danford, Mr. Jervis had a party, and at least a dozen ladies came—Miss Vincent and Mrs. Sylvester among them."

"Oh! Then you never saw Miss Vincent by herself in Mr. Jervis's rooms?"

"Not until the night of the eleventh of November, at Blankhampton."

"Now, how do you remember that it was the eleventh of November?"

"Because it was the day that Mr. Jervis came back from London."

"But do you remember all the dates when your master returned from a few days' leave?"

"I remember that date," said Tinker, sturdily.

"But why do you remember it?"

"For private reasons of my own," Tinker answered.

"What reason?"

"Reasons connected with a letter which I wrote that afternoon."

"Oh, a love letter?"

"A letter," said Tinker, sturdily.

"What makes you think it was the afternoon of the same day?"

"Because I was writing it in my kitchen when Miss Vincent arrived, and I left it upon the table while I went to speak to her."

"Did Miss Vincent come into the kitchen?"

"No, sir."

"Where is the kitchen?"

"Immediately below Mr. Jervis's quarters."

"How did you know Miss Vincent was at the door?"

"Because the cabman came inside the entrance and shouted."

"How did you know he was shouting for you?"

"I didn't."

"What made you go out?"

"I didn't go out. One of the other servants went out."

"How many of you share one kitchen?"

"Four of us."

"Oh, and one of the others went out?"

"Yes, sir. I think it was Mr. Ames's servant—indeed, I am almost sure of it."

"He went out, and what then?"

"He came back, and said there was a lady enquiring for Mr. Jervis."

"Yes, and then?"

"I went out, of course, to see who it was, and found it was Miss Vincent."

"And when your master came home, and you told him there was a lady there, what did he say?"

"Well, you see, sir, he saw the lady before he saw me, so that I didn't tell him there was a lady there. He just walked in and found her."

Although the two lawyers tried hard to elicit further information from Tinker, they did not succeed, and indeed, they both sat down, feeling that there was nothing more to be got out of this particular witness. There was, however, something more to elicit, and Mr. Winthrop managed to do it, for as his rival sat down, he rose to his feet.

"You had an opportunity of seeing Miss Vincent when she was dining with Mr. Jervis?"

"Certainly, sir."

"Do you remember what sort of a dress she wore?"

"Yes, sir, she had a black skirt—or if not black, it was a very dark brown, or some other dark colour—and a red silk body."

"What sort of a body?"

"It was a bright red silk, and was very much drawn—all in little tucks and gathers and things of that kind."

"Yes. What else?"

"And it had a turned down collar and cuffs that turned up."

"How came you to notice all this?"

"Well, sir, I did notice it."

"Very good. That will do."

The great lawyer just glanced at the observant Coroner, and with the tips of his fingers lifted the black woollen gown that was lying before them on the table.

CHAPTER XX.

GOOD MEN AND TRUE.

"To be weak is miserable.
Doing or suffering."

MILTON.

To the intense disgust of the great lawyer, the verdict of the Coroner's jury was one of wilful murder against Philip Jervis. In vain did Mr. Winthrop point to the fact that they had the unimpassioned and reliable evidence of the soldier servant, Tinker, to prove that Miss Vincent had until a late hour of the night of the eleventh of November worn a black or very dark coloured skirt and a bright red silk bodice, a garment which he believed was technically called a "blouse." They had the evidence of the deceased's nearest family relative to prove that she had never seen her in the possession of such a garment as that in which she was eventually dis-

covered. In place of the neat boots which were Miss Vincent's habitual wear, they had found on the body a pair of exceedingly shabby cheap boots of a size known as number fives, and this he triumphantly pointed out as tending to show that the death of the deceased lady had not taken place either on the night of the eleventh of November or on the following day, but rather tended to prove that she had remained in the town for certainly some weeks, living nobody knew how, living nobody knew where, and retaining only the outer garments which she had been accustomed to wear in Danford. Mr. Winthrop asked one pungent question—where was the deceased Katherine Vincent between the eleventh of November, when she was dressed in the ordinary habiliments of a lady, and the time when she met her death in the vicinity of the river, being found in an almost unrecognisable condition on the twenty-eighth of January, only partially dressed in garments which could be sworn to by her nearest relations and friends? He maintained that they could not return a verdict of wilful murder against his client without first discovering the actual date of the death, without finding out whether there was any person in the town who had seen her after the eleventh of November, without finding out what she had done with the various garments which she had brought with her from Danford, and what had become of the small black bag which the cabman declared her to have carried with her.

Mrs. Sylvester had told them that her niece possessed several valuable rings and a watch and chain, and the servant Tinker had spoken to her being in possession of watch, chain, rings, a bangle, and a brooch on the night of the eleventh of November, when he had every opportunity of noticing her during her visit to his master's rooms. What had become of these various articles? They were not on

the body. They were apparently not in one of the many pawnshops of the town. Where were they? What had become of them? To have exchanged her good and fairly expensive boots for those in which the feet of the dead lady were found surely betokened the greatest privation and poverty on the part of the wearer. One could not imagine, the great lawyer went on to say, that any young lady accustomed to wearing good boots would bring herself to don a pair so shabby and of such a cheap description as the boots which were now before them on the table.

"I ask you, gentlemen," he said, "are those the boots of a lady? Are those the boots of a person accustomed to move in a good class of life? Of a person with fifty pounds a year to spend upon her clothing? I most emphatically say no! Therefore, I must say, it seems to me that if Katherine Vincent was reduced to such a pitch of poverty as to be obliged to don such a beggarly pair of boots as those which you now see, she would have first parted with every article of value which she possessed. Now there is only one way of parting with jewellery—it either goes to the pawnshop or the jeweller's, and at present we can find no trace of any of the articles of jewellery which Miss Vincent is alleged to have had in her possession on the night of the eleventh of November."

However, the great lawyer's eloquence was of no use. The men who sit upon Coroners' juries are not as a rule especially intelligent people, and there almost always lingers amongst them a feeling that their decision is not a final one, and that they had better err on the side of sternness than of overleniency. Therefore, in this instance, the verdict which was returned was one of wilful murder against Philip Jervis. This decision was received with very different outward expression by those

whom it most nearly concerned. If Jervis himself blanched a little as he heard the fatal words, that was all. He looked at his lawyer, and that astute gentleman shrugged his shoulders and turned his hands palm uppermost as if it was really quite what he expected. Of the dead girl's nearest relatives, Mr. Sylvester looked profoundly astonished, his wife hastily drew down her veil, and John Sylvester sat bolt upright in his place staring with a positively malignant joy on the man who had supplanted him in his cousin's affections. Of the officers of the White Horse then in the room, every one pressed forward to shake the hand of the accused and tell him that nothing—nothing in the world—would alter their faith in him. Then Jervis was hurried away, and slowly the crowded assembly straggled out of the room and dispersed to their various homes.

George Winthrop returned to London the same night, but not before he had had a brief interview with his client, who once more found himself in Blankhampton Gaol.

"I must go back to town this evening," he said, as soon as he entered the cell. "I have got a dozen important matters awaiting me, but you need not put yourself out on that account. I shall leave Mitcham here exclusively at your service—that is to say, to follow up every little trail and clue that is possible to us. I need not tell you to give him every help that lies in your power. Whatever he wants to know, satisfy him if you can. He will ask you nothing without a reason. You must not be downcast about this decision, because it is a common custom with Coroners' juries to simply send the case to a higher power, and then they feel that they have washed their hands of the responsibility of letting a serious case slip through their fingers. In a few days I shall be down again. Meantime, I shall retain Sir John

McCormack in your interest. Of course, it is a great nuisance for you having to be kept in here, but so long as the ultimate result is all right, you must just put up with it."

"And you will set to work to trace out those jewels, I suppose?" said Jervis.

"That will be Mitcham's first business. You, I suppose, are not able to give me a detailed account of them?"

"To a certain extent, yes. Miss Vincent wore a watch which had 'M. V.' upon the back in diamonds. It had been her father's wedding present to her mother at the time of their marriage. The chain was rather thick and rather long—a plain cable. Her brooch I really don't remember—I mean I don't remember what brooch she wore that night, but three rings she invariably wore. One was a ruby set with a diamond on either side in an open-work setting. The ruby was a fine one, and it had been her mother's engagement ring. She always wore that upon the third finger of her right hand, and she certainly was wearing it the last time I saw her. On her left hand she always wore a pink coral and diamond marquise. The coral was very pale, and the ring was the shape of a lozenge. She wore it on the middle finger. On the little finger of the same hand she had a pink topaz set with pearls. I know the ring well, because when I first knew her she used to wear a turquoise—a single turquoise—and I several times said to her that it was bad taste to wear a blue and a pink ring upon the same hand, and suggested that she should wear it upon the right hand. She did not do so, because she said that she could never wear a ring upon her right hand little finger without being hurt when she shook hands with people, and also declared that it was as bad taste to wear a turquoise against a ruby as to wear a turquoise against pink coral. Eventually she changed the ring for the topaz set in

pearls, and she was wearing it when I saw her on the night of the eleventh of November."

"Did you ever give her a ring?"

"No. You see I was not engaged to her. I was only very fond of her. I did give her things, of course—sweetmeats and music and books, and so on, but the only thing in the way of ornament that I gave her was a large silver clasp for her belt."

"Was she wearing that the last time you saw her? Did her people know, do you think?"

"I can't say. I should say not. I believe she did not take them into her confidence; or only as much as was absolutely necessary."

"I see. Well, at all events, that poor soul who was taken out of the river the other day had no possessions of that kind. If she had them she must have got rid of them. Would you know the clasp again?"

"Oh, yes. I should know the clasp because I had her initials put on one half and my own on the other."

"You had?"

"I had."

"Oh! Were they conspicuous?"

"Not at all. They were very small indeed, so that it should not be noticed by her own people."

"I see. Well, we must make it our business to trace that jewellery," said the lawyer. "And now, my dear sir, I must bid you good-bye for a few days. Rest assured that I shall not forget you. I am, if possible, more deeply interested in your case than I have been in any one for at least ten years, and you know I have not the reputation of being careless with my clients."

Jervis laughed outright. "Oh, no, I am not afraid that you will not do your best for me, Mr. Winthrop, and really I am not half as anxious about the affair as my friends are. It is only when I think—when I

remember that I might have prevented all this, that my heart feels sore—very sore.”

“I am sure it does, my dear fellow, I am sure it does,” said the lawyer, with a suspicious huskiness in his tones.

“I feel more and more,” said Jervis, looking at the ends of his fingers, which were strangely blanched for so strong a man, “I feel more and more every day that I was wrong in my treatment of her that night. I ought to have been kinder—I ought to have been more natural—I ought to have behaved more as I felt. God knows that I had no wrong thoughts in my mind towards her! If I had one, she would never have gone away in the dark hours of the early morning. And it was because I was so fond of her, it was because I did think of her good name, that I thought of her welfare before my own gratification, that I was so angry with her as I was. Poor child! It cuts me like a knife to think that I can never tell her so now! That she will never understand that she went to her horrible death not knowing that I had only love for her—that my anger was only because I loved her. I daresay you can hardly understand how it is that I care so little about my position, and not so much more for the result of the enquiry, but, after all, the best half of my life is gone, and seems very desolate and dreary without her. I really don’t care so much whether things go for or against me.”

“But you ought to care,” said the lawyer, breaking in upon the other’s sad tones with a brisk and cheerful air, “you ought to care! The instinct of life is very strong and very sweet, and although, as you say, it is very hard to feel that the girl you cared for went to her death believing that you were very angry with her and indifferent to her, at the same time, my dear fellow, if you believe in religion at all, you must believe surely that she knows at this

moment exactly what you are feeling. At any rate, it is my business to get you off, and if my skill is worth anything, I shall accomplish that much."

CHAPTER XXI

STEPHANOTIS.

Humanity is never so beautiful as when praying for forgiveness.
RICHTER.

HOWEVER, try as Mitcham, the detective, would, he could find no trace of the jewellery which was declared by several witnesses to be in Katey Vincent's possession on the evening of the eleventh of November. He ransacked every pawnshop and jewel dealer's in Blankhampton. There are many pawnshops in Blankhampton. I have often been puzzled to know why this special class of business should flourish there so amazingly, because it is only a place of some seventy thousand inhabitants; nevertheless, it is a fact that pawnshops flourish almost as freely as they do in Wardour-street.

I once made a pilgrimage round Blankhampton for the purpose of examining the exterior of these houses of relief. I do not think that I missed one, and I found one peculiarity common to all—they every one had worn doorsteps. There is a great difference between a London pawnshop and a country pawnshop. In London there are many city men who regularly put their books into pawn when they close their offices. Others again who only resort to that method of guardianship from Friday night to Monday morning. There are hundreds of families in London who regularly every summer, when they go

away for two or three months' holiday, put the whole of their silver into the charge of some respectable pawnbroker on a merely nominal loan, but in a place like Blankhampton, I doubt if pawnshops are ever used for such purposes. From exhaustive knowledge of Blankhampton and the ways of its inhabitants, I feel sure that the pawnshops are only used in cases of stern necessity. I have known a poor soul in that ancient city who carried her best brooch in her pocket for a whole week, and twice a day took her way past the biggest pawnshop in the town, feeling that if she could only summon up courage to pass within the dreadful portal she would be able to possess herself of a little ready money. Poor dear woman! She never summoned up sufficient courage to take the irrevocable step. And to the end of her blameless life she was free from the taint of having raised money on her most valuable worldly possession.

It is so different in London. I was visiting a friend one day who was what we, in our modern colloquial, slipshod English would call a very "swagger" person, a woman of class, of large means, and of the highest intelligence, and we began to talk about the state of being hard up—the awkwardness it was to be hard up, more especially when your friends believe you to be well off. She said to me, "Oh, my dear, you don't know what it is to be poor! You don't understand what some people suffer for want of money."

I smiled. "My dear lady," I said to her, "when I first knew you we literally had not got two sixpences to bless ourselves with."

"You don't mean it? You really don't mean that?"

I replied that I meant it—absolutely.

She said—"How was it you never told me?"

I said, "Why should I? At that time I hadn't

known you very long, and it never occurred to me to carry my troubles to a stranger—particularly when they were only money troubles.”

“Now, listen to me,” she said, “you know that I am your friend. Now, if in time to come you should ever be in want of money, you may always come to me for it. If I don’t happen to have it by me, I nearly always have the means of getting it. You see this ring,” holding out her hand, with a large marquise diamond ring upon it, “I call this my friends’ ring, because, whenever I have a friend who is in want of twenty or thirty pounds if I cannot lend it to her myself, I go and pledge this ring. I am thankful to say that I have never yet had to do so for myself, but for my friends I have done it many times. So you see, I feel that I am not taking my husband’s money—I am simply depriving myself of the pleasure of wearing one of my rings, and I am able to help my friends without costing anybody anything except myself.”

I have never yet had need to avail myself of that kind friend’s offer, but I have thought of our conversation very often during the last six or seven years—in fact, whenever I see her, whenever I hear her name mentioned—and I have wondered whether in the whole of Blankhampton, taking all its seventy thousand inhabitants, there exists one person who would—I might almost say could—do a friend such a service. I don’t think so. No. And yet the Blankhampton pawnshops flourish. I have known more than one Worshipful Mayor who rose to the highest point of civic eminence through the medium of the pawnshop. And I can point to a good many families of what one might almost call the purest social water, who have built up their name and fortune on a system not so very different from that of the pawnbroker. Yet in all of the many establishments of the kind Detective Mitcham was unable to find any

trace of the pretty rings, and the watch with its diamond monogram, which Katey Vincent had worn on the evening of the eventful eleventh of November.

Not that the detective spent any idle time in Blankhampton, those interested in the case could not afford to be idle, for it would naturally be tried at the Spring Assizes. The Circuit was started in Blankhampton, and the Assizes were already fixed to take place at the end of February, so that there was barely a month in which either side could work up their case. Still, prowl, and enquire, and think, and fret, and follow up as he would, it seemed as if the jewellery of which Katey Vincent had been possessed on the night of the eleventh of November had absolutely vanished out of human ken. Nor could he, although he searched the town, and by this I mean the poorer parts of Blankhampton, over and over, discover traces of any such person having been seen as the dead girl between the eleventh of November and Christmas time. He argued that she must have lived somewhere, she must have eaten and slept somewhere, she must have bartered part of her own garments for others in some shop or with some person; still, he could find no trace. So far as the Blankhampton police could discover, no young woman was missing, no unaccustomed figure had been noticed, and the searching for a clue seemed as impossible of success as seeking for the proverbial needle in the proverbial bundle of hay. The detectives on the other side, were also as busily engaged as Mitcham was, in trying to trace the history of the days between the eleventh of November and the supposed date of Katey Vincent's death.

And John Sylvester remained in Blankhampton in defiance of his father's wishes, and acted as though he considered himself at the head of the case for the prosecution. The young man was at this time really living a very terrible life. He naturally became ac-

quainted with a few of the townspeople, chiefly those who loathed the military element in the community, and believed every red coat to cover an unmitigated villain, who, with a good deal of righteous mouthing, condemned Jervis without a hearing, speaking of him freely as "the murderer," and who pursed up their lips, turned up their eyes, and spread out their hands palms uppermost when any suggestion was made that undoubtedly he had thought of her good name before his own inclinations. To such as these, the young man who was so unmistakably full of sincere grief for the girl's death, who openly proclaimed his passionate and undying love for her, and who showed such real English dogged determination to follow the case up to the bitter end, appeared in the light of a martyr and a hero. They were good, mediocre, narrow-minded people all these, men and women of sound principle—according to their particular religious lights, that is, and really of very much the same calibre as the early Puritans, who practically made England what she is to-day. To them, the lives of the class above them were steeped in wickedness, and they regarded the Lord Bishop of the Diocese as the most worldly man whom they had ever known. Their common every-day talk was interlarded with cut and dried religious phrases which they really did not mean at all, but which were as much a jargon with them as "ain't it" and "dontcherknow" is the jargon of a certain set in London to-day. But these good people would have been considerably astonished if they could have realised the depth of malignant hatred, which had no kinship with the more noble feeling of justice, which raged in John Sylvester's passionate heart. He worried the police, he was always after the detectives who were on the side of the prosecution, he went day after day and gloated over the great brown walls of the gaol, behind which Jervis was kept a safe prisoner, and he looked for-

ward with joy to the last dread morning when his life should pay the penalty, not for having killed Katey, for really that side of the question scarcely entered his thoughts, but for having supplanted him in the affection which, mind you, he had never possessed. Almost daily, too, he might be seen tearing along the road to Ingleby, making pathetic passionate pilgrimages to the grave in the quiet little country churchyard where she was lying.

It was about ten days before the time of the Assizes that he went tearing along the road towards Ingleby, across the corner of the park by a little footpath and hurriedly up to the lych-gate, when he ran against and almost knocked over a young lady, who was just leaving the churchyard.

"Oh, Mr. Sylvester!" she exclaimed.

He looked at her for a moment with eyes wholly wanting in recognition.

"Don't you remember me?" she said, seeing that he did not know her. "My sister and I were at Danford a long time during the summer. We were staying in the Williamsons' house with the people to whom they let it. You remember me now? I used often to come and play tennis with Katey."

"Miss Atkinson!" he gasped. "I remember you perfectly. I—I—am just going to her grave—I come every day. Of course, you knew what I felt for her, how I worshipped her, how I feel towards the brute that hounded her to death."

"Oh, don't say that!" Jill cried, "don't say that! Nothing is proved against him, and really, I don't think that he did it, believe me I do not."

John Sylvester, turning, looked at her. "You know the fellow?" he said curtly.

"Oh, yes, well," she cried, "he has been a great deal to Ingleby since we have been here, and he was so fond of Katey! I can never believe that he would harm her."

"He killed her," said John Sylvester deliberately.

"But you don't know—you only think—you only surmise. There is no evidence to prove that."

"You will see," he said, with brutal bluntness. "There will be evidence enough to hang him."

Jill Atkinson shrank back. "Oh, but you would not wish that unless you were quite sure?"

"I would," he said furiously. "Besides, I am quite sure—I know that he killed her."

"But how can you know it?"

"How? My whole instinct tells me so! I could go through the whole pitiful scene as well as if I had been there and seen it with my own eyes. My poor Katey! There was nobody by to help you, no hand to shield you, no roof to shelter you except the one that you scorned, the hand that you refused, the love that you rejected for the man who did you to your death!"

"Oh, Mr. Sylvester!" cried Jill, in quavering accents, "don't say such dreadful things. If it is proved against him he will suffer. Think what his situation is now."

"H'm! He has a chance of getting off, now," he blurted out.

"Oh, yes, but every one should have a chance of getting off, and to think if he is innocent—and doesn't get off—oh, how dreadful! What anguish, what agony he must be enduring! I cannot bear to think about him. I have been in here to lay some flowers on poor Katey's grave. She used to be so fond of stephanotis. I remember how pleased she was with some stephanotis one day last summer at Danford, which I fancy he sent her. She wore it, and she kept touching it and looking at it, and setting it straight; and to-day, when I went through the conservatories, the stephanotis was all in bloom and so lovely that I begged some to bring and lay on her grave. It is all one can do for her now."

"You brought—stephanotis flowers—to her grave—because he had given some to her once!" said John Sylvester, looking at her with flaming eyes. "Is that the best you can do for her now, Miss Atkinson? Oh, I thought better of any woman than that! Do you think I will let them stay there?—his flowers—on her grave——"

"My flowers, Mr. Sylvester," she interrupted.

"Yes, her favourite flowers, because——"

"My flowers, Mr. Sylvester," she interrupted, "and her favourite ones——"

"Yes, her favourites, because he used to give them to her! And that is all your friendship can do!"

"I don't think that Mr. Jervis would have said that to me," she said, standing quite straight and with much dignity confronting him.

He almost snarled at her in his anger. "What, you too! I wonder what is the charm this fellow has for all women! She, the best, truest, pluckiest girl I ever knew in my life, lost her head through fascination of him, chucked up her dearest interests, threw over name, fame, family—everything, for this one man! You, a girl in a different station of life, living in a rapid London set, accustomed to luxury and visiting, to gaiety of all kinds, you feel exactly the same effect. I cannot understand it. I suppose, you, too, are in love with him."

Miss Jill looked at him in unlimited and unutterable contempt—"I am quite sure of one thing, Mr. Sylvester," she said, in a studiously calm voice, "that you are excessively impertinent. I have uttered no word which could lead you to think anything of the kind, and if I had done so, it would be no business of yours. That your cousin preferred Mr. Jervis to you is not surprising. Poor Katey! Think what her fate would have been if she had married you! Why, she is better off in her quiet grave there,

than with a man who could so far forget his manhood as to utter such words to any woman as you have just allowed yourself to say to me! Let me pass, please, I have no longer any acquaintance with you."

"Stop!" he said roughly, and barring her way to the gate, "I have wanted to speak to you ever since I knew that you were the last except him who saw her alive and well. You saw her that night—you gave your evidence at the inquest—tell me—tell me—was she looking—?"

"I will tell you nothing," Jill interrupted, impetuously.

"You will tell me nothing! You defy me! Why, I could kill you as you stand there!"

"Yes, you could, but you won't! You won't lay a finger on me, Mr. John Sylvester. You are too great a coward, although I am only a little woman, with nothing with which to protect myself! But you are afraid of me, and, as I say, you will not lay a finger on me!"

"Ah, I was only speaking in anger of what I could do. I had no intention of harming you. Why should I? If you are in love with him, God help you! You are in a sorry plight!"

"You are quite mistaken," she said, in a very indifferent tone, "I am not in a sorry plight at all. I came this afternoon to Katey's grave full of kindly remembrances of her and of pity and commiseration for you. I shall not come again. I would not pay that poor girl such a bad compliment as to continue a practice which gives rise to unseemly wrangling within the very precincts of the church! It is desecration, nothing more or less. No matter what my feelings are, if I be totally indifferent to Mr. Jervis, or if for me he is the one man in the whole world, it is no matter—I would not change places with you, no—nor would he!"

"He won't have the chance of changing places with anybody," said John Sylvester, lounging against the gate, and trying apparently to force the dispute still further.

Jill Atkinson, however, did not condescend to reply to this.

"Let me pass, if you please, Mr. Sylvester," she said, coldly.

But John Sylvester did not move. On the contrary, he leant still more doggedly against the gate; and in truth the girl thought that he was more or less out of his mind. She had no fancy for remaining longer in that lonely spot with this semi-madman, and she cast about in her mind as to how she could escape without doing anything undignified or foolish. Then she remembered the little gate by which they frequently had come across the park to service, and which she had avoided that day on account of the dampness of the grass. She thought it most probable that he did not know of the existence of such an outlet, and turned sharply on her heel, saying—

"No matter, I will not trouble you to be polite enough to let me pass!"

She had just reached the chancel entrance of the church, close to which was the narrow pathway, which led to the wicket for which she was making, when John Sylvester passed her hurriedly, and with an exclamation of fury, shot ahead of her in the direction of Katey's grave. Involuntarily the girl stood at the parting of the ways and watched his movements, when she saw him with eager, frenzied hands tear off the beautiful blooms with which she had decked it, and flinging them on the ground, trampled them under foot. With an exclamation that was between a cry and a gasp, Jill Atkinson took to her heels and fairly ran away.

CHAPTER XXII.

TIME FOR REFLECTION.

"Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,
But bears it out even to the edge of doom."

SHAKESPEARE.

JILL ATKINSON did not speak to any one of the strange encounter which she had had with John Sylvester, but she paid no more visits to the quiet grave in Ingleby churchyard. In truth, she regarded Katey Vincent's cousin as but little short of a dangerous lunatic maddened to unreasonable fury by jealousy and grief. In a way she was sorry for him, but whenever he crossed her thoughts, she felt devoutly thankful that he had no real say in the matter of judging Jervis. She rather wondered, as the whole affair was in the hands of the police, that he remained on in Blankhampton, where practically he knew no one, and where he could have no chance of getting over the shock and distress of the death of the girl he loved. "Of course," Jill argued in her own thoughts, "Katey could never under any circumstances have consented to marry him!" And she fancied it was a pity that some one did not tell him so, or that he could not be brought to realise that such was the truth. She understood so well how a girl, who was attracted by and in love with such a man as Philip Jervis, would instinctively shrink from the very suggestion of marriage with an uncouth, mannerless young man like her cousin, John Sylvester. But she did not discuss him with any one. She pitied his sorrow, and in a sense she respected his ravings. She felt as if he might, after

a little time had gone by, come to a more just sense of the rights and wrongs of poor Katey's death. She was conscious that now he was not actuated so much by a desire for retributive justice as of personal revenge for his own disappointment; and she was right, although she only saw a little beneath the surface, and being a good girl of an upright and honourable mind, she never realised the depth of malignant and passionate hatred which filled his ill-regulated heart. "Poor Katey!" her thoughts ran, "if he did not mean to marry her, she is better in her quiet grave than left to the mercy of the world and that dreadful young man. Sooner or later he would have pestered her into marrying him, and then he would have worried her life out with jealousy and suspicions about the other one. Poor Katey!"

And still John Sylvester kept on his dark way, still stirring up strife in the hearts of all the Blankhampton people with whom he became acquainted against a man who was lying waiting his trial for the murder of his cousin. By the young ladies of the few families that he knew, he was regarded in the light of a hero, and invested with a halo of romance such as would have astonished even himself. These, too, were accustomed to speak of the military quarter in the garrison as "lost souls" and "doers of evil," yet when any of these little third-rate Puritan maidens met the smart, well-dressed, easy-moving men whom they knew to be officers of one or other of the regiments then quartered in Blankhampton, as they walked about the quaint old streets of the city, it must be admitted they glanced at them with interest and envied not a little their sisters who were in daily intercourse with these men, whom they had been taught to believe were as wild beasts going about seeking whom they might devour. John Sylvester, on the contrary, had no illusions about

him. He deliberately and vindictively went for the class whom he believed would chiefly contribute to the jury in the Ingleby murder case, and he set himself to become as popular as possible amongst them. His father, who had a great idea of his place in the world, and aspired to the position in Danford of a semi-county magnate, would have been furious if he had known the part his son was playing. But in his few letters home, John Sylvester kept his own counsel, and his parents believed that he had remained in the old city for the sole purpose of watching the enquiry into his cousin's death.

So the days crept on and on, and with each one the case for the prosecution became more serious, while that for the defence did not advance its interests by a hair's-breadth. You see, there was a difference between the two. On the one side there was that tangible, awful, terrible, dead thing, bearing the marks of fearful injuries that could not by any possibility have been self-inflicted; there was the unalterable and damning proof of the dead girl's visit to Jervis's quarters, of his unkind reception of her last effort to win the shelter of his love; there was the fact that her bed had not been slept in, that she had disappeared absolutely from human ken until she turned up at the water-gates of Ingleby, mere flotsam and jetsam, a horrible thing, almost unrecognisable even by those who had loved her best; in addition, there had also been the fact that Jervis had seemed singularly unlike himself during the few weeks following the eleventh of November, and there was proof that he had obtained leave for a single night, had journeyed to Danford, and put up at the principal hotel there, and had spent the most of his time upon the road leading to Mr. Sylvester's house. Then there was the circumstance that between the hours of two and half-past six on the morning of the twelfth of November no one in

or about the officers' quarters at Blankhampton Cavalry Barracks could give any evidence concerning his whereabouts. It is true that Tinker had found his master asleep at half-past six o'clock in the bed which he had made up for him over night, but how long he had been there, and where he might or might not have been from two o'clock, when he and his brother officers had separated to go to their respective rooms, nobody could say. On the other hand, there was so little that could be urged in favour of the defence. The prisoner had admitted being very angry with the dead girl when he found her in his quarters, and although that was admittedly a reasonable feeling for him to entertain, yet it was not one which under the circumstances was likely to improve his case. Never for one moment did Jervis admit, either to his lawyer or to any one else, that he was the least little bit apprehensive of the final issue of the trial. He passed his time in Blankhampton Gaol quietly and regularly. He received a great many visitors, read a great many novels, smoked a great many cigarettes, and took his daily exercise very much after the manner of the bears at the Zoo, but he never expressed any impatience or nervousness, never asked what the general attitude towards him was in the minds of the townspeople, or, indeed, spoke of the case at all, excepting when it was spoken of by others to him.

Of a truth he was more depressed, and, as he put it to himself, cut up over the death of Katey than any of those about him might have believed, or, for the matter of that, than he might have believed himself six months before. Almost unconsciously she had twined herself about his heart, until now that she was gone, life did not seem to be worth the living without her. Often and often her face came between him and the pages of the book that he was reading, her face as he had seen it last, crushed with

the weight of his reproaches, shadowed by the belief of his unkindness, filled with the despair of her soul's disappointment; and at such times he would drop his face upon his arms to hide the scalding tears that would come at the thought of how different everything would have been if only he had acted differently that fatal night. And yet, he knew that he had acted for the best, in his heart he knew that he had taken the straightforward and honourable course. True, he had been vexed with her, but he had been more vexed for her than with her.

Well, it was no use repining, no use looking back, no use wishing that the past was different; the past was past, the past was as it was, and nothing could alter it now. Katey was gone. In his effort to save her he had sent her out to a cruel and treacherous death, and here was he in durance vile, suspected by half the world of having been the one to do that horrible and cowardly deed. For his own safety he cared but little and thought less. He had sent for George Winthrop more from a feeling that for the sake of his regiment, he ought to make the best defence he could, rather than from any fear of his own life. About that he was absolutely indifferent. George Winthrop had retained the two greatest criminal counsel of the day, and yet the days crept on, one after another, until the time of the Assizes drew nearer and nearer, and little or nothing was done by all these clever brains in winning any evidence to make the defence a safe one. He heard from some of his brother officers that the Atkinson girls were still staying at Ingleby. He wondered in an indifferent kind of way that it should be so, but it honestly never occurred to him that they were remaining on his account, or thought for a moment that Jill had taken, or was taking, the very smallest interest in himself or in his welfare. Of John Sylvester he said nothing.

CHAPTER XXIII.

CIVIC GAIETY.

"All the events of our life are materials out of which we may make what we will."

NOVALIS.

IN the good old town of Blankhampton they hold three Assizes during the twelve months, and let me tell you that Assizes form a cycle of gaiety, a blossoming out socially of many persons who remain absolutely without gaiety until such time as the judges are timed to come round again. The ceremonies in connection with the setting of the machinery of the Law in motion are very quaint. The High Sheriff goes to meet the great Lord or Lords of Assize at the railway station, and deposits his or their lordships, as the case may happen to be, at the great mansion which is reserved for the use of the judge or judges. There his or their lordships get into what might vulgarly be called their paint, and then they are fetched by the City Sheriff to perform the ceremony which is known as "Opening the Courts." But the gaol at Blankhampton is situated outside the city boundaries, therefore just without the gates you may witness the interesting little ceremony of a very gorgeous old gentleman, or possibly two of them, dressed in scarlet and ermine stepping gingerly to the great detriment of his or their smart buckled shoes, down from the City Sheriff's carriage and up into the High Sheriff's carriage. This scarlet gentleman, who wears a sort of State uniform of scarlet and gold with tight white breeches, sits with his back to the horses facing his or their lordships, and

escorts him or them into the precincts of the prison itself. Then the Assizes are declared open, and the little ceremony of changing carriages is again gone through and they reach the city boundary. Sometimes the judges of Assize go straight away and attend Evensong at the "Parish," but this is a matter which depends upon the individual taste of his or their lordships. They always go and call immediately at the Deanery and the Residence, and if one of the judges happens to be a Roman Catholic, upon the spiritual head of the pro-Cathedral also. From thence they go to the Mansion House to call upon the Mayoress, and usually drink tea with that eminently respectable lady. On each evening they have some dinner invitation which has, of course, been arranged long before. I think one is at the Palace, and another usually at the Deanery. On the morning after the arrival of the judges the Mayor gives a breakfast, to which all the quality of the neighbourhood are invited—when I say quality I mean, of course, all the several kinds of quality which you find in such a town as Blankhampton.

The first time you ever go to a judges' breakfast in Blankhampton, you are filled with a certain amount of awe and expectancy. The breakfast is for nine o'clock sharp, and most people get there a little while before that hour. You see the gayest toilettes and the strangest mixture of people possible to behold in any one social function. Of course, the judges' breakfast is one of the social functions *par excellence* in the old city, and if you are not bidden to these festivities at least once in the year, you may as well give up Blankhampton as far as society is concerned—for you are out of it, hopelessly out of it. There are many highly respectable people in the old city who work themselves up as it were through the ranks, through the various stages of civic dignity to civic magnificence, from the various stages of what

may be called the civic working-classes to the proud pre-eminence of civic magnificence in the person of the chief magistrate of the city. I have often thought that if the office of Town Councillor was not a mere stepping stone to the aldermanic and mayoral greatness, that the affairs of the old city would never be carried on; but Mr. Councillor Brown-Smith will of a surety, by-and-by, if he lasts out long enough, bloom into Mr. Alderman Brown-Smith, and once that safe platform is attained, it is only a question of time and life itself for him to reach the dizzy heights from which he would look down upon the world as "Sir Thomas." Oh, Blankhampton society! It is very odd, very strange, and the dignity is so little worth the cost! I look at the place from afar off now-a-days. For months I hear no news of the old city, and then I get a letter from some friend or other, or a Blankhampton paper comes in my road, and I scan its narrow columns curiously and with eager and feverish interest. I always learn something from the "Blankhampton Daily Chronicle," always to me it conveys a moral lesson in every paragraph it contains. I learn with a shock that some have gone up like the bounce of an india-rubber ball before it has had the prick which will leave it bounceless for all time. Others again have gone under apparently without any reason whatsoever. It has always been a matter of mystery with me to conjecture how the good souls who form the inhabitants of the city, whose chronicles I have written with much zest and delight, should find the game worth the candle. When I go to Blankhampton, which is not very often, I always come away with one idea, with one very modern phrase very much in use in modern Babylon in my mind—"It isn't good enough!"

However, as I said just now, it is absolutely necessary for the "mondaine" in Blankhampton to be asked to a judges' breakfast at least once a year, and that

one burst of dissipation is sufficient to put a stamp equivalent to at least nine-carat gold upon its proud recipient, just as I have known persons who exist and take a certain position in the community solely because they possessed the distinction of being seat-holders in the choir of the "Parish," as they call the cathedral in old Blankhampton. What these people do on the other six days of the week is a mystery which nobody ever solves unless it be their intimates, but on Sunday mornings you will see them in their places by a quarter-past ten, and also at least a quarter of an hour before the beginning of the afternoon Service. They are always there, they never miss a single Service which is held on Sunday or special days in the choir; on ordinary week-day matins and Evensong, when the whole of the choir seats are free to anybody who chooses to appropriate them, you never see these particular people at all. And yet, one can hardly call such as these "mondaines," as one instinctively dubs the good people who shine through the fitful comet-like light which sheds its refulgence over the civic throne.

I think the first time that you attend a judges' breakfast, you are more or less shocked to see the evident enjoyment of the Lords Judges of the Assize. There is something revolting—for the first time, at least—when you see two old gentlemen who are going to try some wretched prisoner for his life, whose word will break up homes, part husband and wife, parents and children, wreck for ever all chance of leaving a fair record on their own particular page of the world's history, sitting cracking jokes and regaling themselves with good things, when to the unfamiliar mind it would be more fitting if they passed the time in the sanctuary of the church trying to impress themselves more and more with the weight and gravity of their office. Of course, when you come to think of it in a more reasonable light

than that first one of shocked surprise, it is only rational that judges, like other people, should live their own life apart from their official one. The wretched prisoner awaiting his trial, upon which hangs the issues of life and death, between the high walls of Blankhampton Gaol, is not the only prisoner of the kind in the kingdom, and although one is always told in the newspapers that a judge in condemning a man to the extreme penalty of the law showed visible emotion, yet it is only natural that the awful moment over and the awful words uttered, he goes back and takes up his own place in the world as if such matters as murder and hanging had no existence.

Among others, to this particular breakfast, had been bidden Sir Thomas and Lady Vivian and the house-guests at Ingleby, but they were not present. Lady Vivian on receiving the invitation, had declared, with tears in her soft eyes, that nothing would induce her to go and feast, while a personal friend was on the threshold of trial for his life. Jill Atkinson naturally would not have gone, and although it had been suggested that Jack Atkinson and Sir Thomas should represent the Ingleby household, yet they too cried off, the one because she felt that Jill would be nervous and anxious, and the other because he was moved by the same kindly and neighbourly feelings as his good and gentle wife. Of course, the chief topic of conversation was the great trial which would begin at eleven o'clock, and there were many of the feminine hearts beating that day under all the bravery of gala garments, which throbbed anxiously as they watched the learned judges cracking their pleasantries and jokes as if no Assizes were imminent, and I think many of them would have gone down on their knees and kissed the hem of the scarlet judicial robes if, by so doing, they could have influenced those astute old gentlemen in the very least.

The various courses were hustled through pretty quickly, as is the invariable custom, and by the time the great clock in the State room where the breakfast was laid, had struck the hour of ten, the feeding part of the programme was over, and still the judges lingered on. The Mayoress for the time being was not a particularly intelligent woman. Her only ideas of doing the honours of the civic palace were to say, "Oh, yes——s!" "Oh, no——o!" and if driven into a corner for a more explicit reply, to utter with the shyness of a school-girl of sixteen, "Do you really think so?" But, unfortunately, Lady Lucifer was placed on the other side of the judge who sat upon her civic ladyship's left hand, and as I have remarked more than once, though perhaps not in the pages of this story, Lady Lucifer was one of the brightest women in Blankshire. She, being absolutely unscrupulous in the way of any feeling of honour regarding the sanctity and majesty of the law, spent her entire time trying to fascinate and subjugate the handsome old judge beside whom she sat, and when he had so to speak placed his neck beneath her foot, she then deliberately and boldly sought to influence him with regard to Phil Jervis.

"Mind you, my dear Lord Chief," she remarked, in a confidential undertone, "that man never did it."

"I can't say, I am sure, Lady Lucifer," said the Lord Chief, with the bland urbanity which comes of several glasses of good claret. The Lord Chief was not given to champagne. It did not agree with him. His beverage was Château Lafitte, and although it was a little early in the day, Château Lafitte having been provided, he took it in preference to the tea and coffee which were its alternative.

"No, of course you can't, before the trial comes on, but you mark my words, unless the jury are guided into the right path, it is just as likely as not that they will convict him, because he is good-look-

ing and young and well-bred, and I do hope that you will keep a very sharp eye upon them."

"I believe," said the Lord Chief, still bland and urbane, "that I have somewhat a reputation for understanding juries and their little idiosyncrasies."

"Yes, I know you have, I know; but at the same time I do hope you will."

"I hope I shall do everything that is right, Lady Lucifer," said the old gentleman.

"My dear lord," said she, with her most bewitching smile, "if I were as sure that I should do everything right from now to the end of my life as I am that you will do justice in this and every other case that you are likely to try, I should have a very easy and satisfied conscience about myself."

"Ah, you are altogether too kind to me, and if I were to listen to the voice of the tempter, I should forget that there were any Courts of Assize in the kingdom!" And then he turned and bowed to the lady who was hostess to him, and like magic the large company arose and in less than ten minutes the judges' breakfast was over.

CHAPTER XXIV

AT THE SEAT OF JUDGMENT.

"Oh, what men dare do! What men may do!
What men daily do, not knowing what they do."

SHAKESPEARE.

THE Criminal Court in Blankhampton Castle is a larger and more commodious building than many such courts in various parts of the United Kingdom, yet it was wholly inadequate to accommodate the crowd

of persons who desired, and in many instances insisted, upon effecting an entrance thereto. Many were, of course, disappointed. Room had to be found for all persons in any way connected with the case, and these were many. In a prominent place sat Lady Lucifer, having the previous day written a little note to Jervis telling him that she believed in him implicitly and that she should attend the trial, although she had never attended a murder-trial in her life before, solely with a view to letting him feel that his friends were standing by him, and would continue to do so to whatever issue the trial came. Next to her was Lady Vivian in charge of the two Atkinson sisters, Jill being an important witness in the case. There were nearly all the officers of the White Horse, and more prominent and well-known personages of the neighbourhood than I have here time or space to reckon.

There was a general gasp as Jervis was brought into court. He was pale, but perfectly calm and self-possessed, and bore the close scrutiny of the eyes of the whole assemblage, and also the fire of a good many opera-glasses which some persons had had the bad taste to take with them. Once he bent forward to George Winthrop, who, with his counsel, was immediately below him and whispered, "Now I understand what a beetle with a pin through its back feels like under a microscope!"

"You haven't got the pin through your back yet, my friend," returned George Winthrop, who was apparently very confident of the issue of the case, although in reality he was nothing of the kind.

This was, however, the only remark not strictly relevant to the case that Jervis permitted himself to make, or indeed feel any inclination to make during the whole course of the trial. Oh, how tedious it was! He sat back in the dock and shut his eyes as he listened to the whole story as told from the point of view of the counsel for the prosecution, aided by the

vindictive malice of John Sylvester, who, by the bye, was sitting near to his father and mother just across the court, eyeing the prisoner with looks of fiendish and malicious joy. By the time the counsel for the prosecution had come to the end of his address, all hope of escaping the final doom of a vulgar and cowardly criminal had faded from Jervis's breast; indeed, he thought that it would be small blame to the jury if they refused to take any other view, or indeed listen to any other evidence, as the whole chain of circumstances was laid down so forcibly, so clearly, and with such apparent truthfulness that he once or twice caught himself wondering whether he really had battered in poor little Katey's head or not. Once he opened his eyes and looked at the stolid faces of the jurymen. They were all eminently respectable people, good, God-fearing, honest men, leading reputable and blameless lives, men who perhaps took the nearest road in matters of business, and thought the fingers under the scales and the little differences between the joints in the butcher boy's basket and the joints entered in the customer's book but natural and reasonable, but who yet would shrink with horror and loathing from the dastardly crime of taking away human life and sending a human soul unshriven and without warning before its Maker. However, he could not see from the very stolid and yet earnest faces that they were one whit moved or biassed by the thrilling speech of the counsel for the prosecution; and then the tedious and weary work of examining all the witnesses began. They were so many and they knew so little, and yet they conveyed and implied so much.

There were first of all the two men who had found the dead girl at the water-gate of Ingleby, the doctors who had examined the body and pronounced the cause of death; the Inspector who suspected and traced the prisoner; Jill Atkinson, who entered into the box with

a face blanched like that of a corpse, and who spoke, giving her evidence unwillingly and in pitiful faltering accents, to having known the dead girl intimately during the previous summer, and testified to having seen her emerge from Blankhampton station and get into a cab standing next to the carriage in which she was sitting. She also told how she had heard the cabman reply "Cavalry Barracks? Certainly, miss," and that she had seen the cab drive away. In reply to a question which asked whether she had spoken of this to Jervis, she yet more falteringly detailed the conversation which had passed between them on the following day at Ingleby; and when the ordeal was over, she went back to her seat by Lady Vivian and sheltered herself behind that lady's large black fan.

Then came Tinker, who told the whole story of Katey's arrival at Jervis's quarters, of his master's anger at her appearance, of how he had ordered dinner from the mess, and had served it to them in Jervis's sitting-room, of how Jervis had called her his sister, and had spoken of her as such, and had treated her as if she were such, although Tinker knew perfectly well that he had no such relative. The counsel for the prosecution tried hard to induce him to say something to compromise his master's honour, but beyond telling the bare facts as they had actually happened, Tinker was not drawn into a single admission which could in any way damage Jervis. And so ended the first day of the trial.

On the following day, the case being taken up at the same point where it was left off began with the appearance of several officers of the White Horse who had been in Jervis's company late on the evening of the eleventh of November, but although they were put in as witnesses for the prosecution, it could not be said that they did the prisoner's cause any harm, and indeed they did not desire to do so. Then came

the three nearest relatives of the dead girl—Mr. Sylvester, Mrs. Sylvester, and their son. Then followed the evidence of the commanding officer who had given Jervis leave for the night which he had passed at Danford. He was followed by the landlord of the hotel where he stayed, and by several persons who had seen him on the road leading to Mr. Sylvester's house. These, with one or two more or less unimportant witnesses, closed the case for the prosecution and the day's proceedings.

With the third day opened the case for the defence, and even Jervis himself could not but see how pitifully weak it was, for he had absolutely nothing to say. He was permitted through his lawyer to put in a statement to the effect that he had truly loved the murdered girl, that he had only been angry with her on so unexpectedly finding her in his quarters because of the affection that he bore her, and because he had every intention of marrying her. He admitted that he had told her in his anger that he would not do so, but protested that there was not the slightest reason why, whether he meant to marry her or not, he should have taken her life or injured her in any way. Several of the witnesses were called up again and re-examined, and at last, after an impassioned address from the prisoner's chief counsel, the Lord Chief Justice deliberately and judicially summed up the case, and as every deliberate and calmly spoken word was uttered, all the anxious hearts in that densely crowded court sank lower and lower with the conviction that Jervis was as good as hanged already, and I am bound to say that only one of them all throbbed with a malicious and unholy joy, only one pair of eyes gloated over the pale composure of the prisoner at the bar, only one man longed for the next hour to pass that he might be perfectly sure of the doom by which that same prisoner was encompassed. I need hardly say that this was John Sylvester, and when the last words

were spoken, and the jury slowly filed away, the judge left the bench, the barristers streamed out from their respective places, and the prisoner disappeared from the dock, then only did John Sylvester move from his seat or cease staring straight at that part of the court which most eyes had scrupulously avoided with the exception of those who had brought their opera-glasses in order that they might miss nothing of the rare show of a man's life hanging in the balance.

An hour went slowly and heavily by. Those in the court who were afraid of losing their places tried to while away the time by surreptitiously nibbling at biscuits and sandwiches, and refreshing themselves with little nips of brandy and water, talking the while in whispers of the chances that Jervis still had of getting off scot-free, and of the fearful thing it would be for everybody if he did not do so.

"If the worst comes to the worst," said one pretty young woman to another, "I feel I should never get over it. He was at my house only the day before he went away on his long leave. Of course, I don't believe it!"

"Oh, no, of course you don't. And yet, all the evidence went dead against him. And the summing up,—oh, it made me feel quite ill!"

"I suppose the judge is obliged to sum up in accordance with the evidence?"

"Oh, yes, of course. Besides, it is nothing to him,—I don't suppose he ever met him. If he had, it would not make any difference. Dear! When are they coming back!"

But there was no sign of the jury coming back again, and the clock went almost round again before the jury filed slowly in, and after a pause of the most death-like silence, the door at the back of the judge's bench opened to admit the Lord Chief in all the majesty of his scarlet ermine-trimmed robes. There

was yet another pause, more breathless and oppressively silent than the last, then Jervis appeared in the dock, where he stood to hear the verdict, his hands lying easily upon the iron railing, his face very white, but his features and demeanour calm, composed, and soldierly. They are awful, such moments as these. Men and women live a whole lifetime in the space of five minutes. Jervis had no hope, no anticipation that the end would be any but the dread one of condemnation. He looked at the jury as did every one else, but there was nothing to be learned from the stolid and rather downcast faces of the twelve good men and true. And then the Clerk of the Court put the momentous question, "Gentlemen of the jury, are you agreed upon your verdict?" and, receiving a reply in the affirmative, put the question which always follows, "Gentlemen of the jury, do you find the prisoner at the bar guilty or not guilty?" The question died away into a breathless, oppressive silence, then the foreman of the jury said in tones which he tried hard to make firm, "Guilty, my lord."

"You find the prisoner at the bar guilty of murder?"

"We do. We find the prisoner at the bar guilty of murder."

The intense silence was broken by a suppressed sob. Lady Lucifer caught hold of Lady Vivian's hand and forced her handkerchief into her mouth to keep herself from screaming. Lady Vivian sat like a woman petrified, and Jill Atkinson cowered down against her capacious shoulder and shuddered visibly. Of all who crowded that court, Jervis himself was the least moved, the least surprised. To him it was merely the fulfilment of the expected, and he looked round with an air of quiet surprise at the evidences of grief which he saw on all sides of him. Then the judge put the usual question; had he anything to say, to which he answered, in cold,

firm, well-bred tones, "My lord, I have already said everything that there is for me to say upon this subject. I wish to add nothing more." A moment later the judge took up the little square of black cloth which is known as the "black cap," and adjusted it at the usual ludicrous angle.

"Prisoner at the bar," he began, "you have this day been adjudged by twelve of your fellow-countrymen guilty of the awful and terrible crime of murder, for which you must suffer the just penalty of the law." Then there was an unseemly scuffle at the door, which caused the learned judge to look up in horror and raise one forbidding hand to quell the disturbance. But it was useless! A woman's voice rang through the court with one single word—"STOP!"

CHAPTER XXV.

STOP!

"Give every man thine ear, but few thy voice."

SHAKESPEARE.

AT the sound of the woman's voice crying "stop!" a sob of excitement sounded through the crowded court, every head was turned to see the cause of the excitement, and the prisoner at the bar grasped the railing in front of him with a convulsive movement, while his rival, John Sylvester, sprang up in his seat with an ashen face, hands trembling like an aspen, and astonishment and incredulity plainly stamped upon his features. The judge held up a warning hand—"What is the meaning of this unseemly disturbance?" he de-

manded, in a terrible voice, "Let the court be cleared."

"No! no!" rang out the same excited feminine tones. "My lord, you must hear me! These men will not let me pass. I insist upon being heard, before you go any further,—it is a matter of life and death. I must pass! You must hear me!"

"Who says 'must' in this court?" asked the judge, sternly.

"I—Katherine Vincent!" came back the answer.

The buzz of excitement rose to fever height. Several women shrieked, and the judge's hand was lowered—"Allow Katherine Vincent to pass," were the words that fell from his lips, and then, and then only, did the knot of officials who were guarding the doors fall back, when a girl, well-dressed and with an ashen face framed in a mass of red gold hair, was shewn by an usher into the body of the court.

"My lord," she panted, "I beg you to forgive me for creating this disturbance. The men who guard the doors would not believe my story that I am really Katherine Vincent, on account of whose supposed death you have been holding this trial. My lord, indeed, I am that person. There are my uncle and my aunt, and my cousin close by me. Speak!" she cried passionately to her uncle, "Tell everybody that I am your niece."

At this point the proceedings became distinctly informal. The counsel for the defence hastily rose in his place—"Will your lordship permit this and other witnesses to be examined?"

"Certainly!" was the reply of the Lord Chief. "Let this young lady go into the witness-box immediately. Gentlemen of the jury, I am sorry to keep you still longer on this case, but if this young lady is speaking the truth—and I see no reason to doubt her—we must all be very thankful that an in-

nocent man has not suffered through our instrumentality," and upon this the judge bowed to the jury, and the foreman of the jury bowed back to the judge, and the twelve good men and true once more sat down in their seats, no longer stolid and downcast, but every man keenly and eagerly looking for this new evidence which would completely quash the case as it then stood. It was a noticeable circumstance that no greeting took place between Katey Vincent and her relatives. She had come as it were back from the dead, they were actually clad in mourning on her account, and yet not one of the three, not even the redoubtable John, appeared to show the slightest pleasure or satisfaction on finding that she was not dead, and had never been dead. Of all that crowded court, only Jervis looked at her with a glad light in his eyes, but a light which Katey never saw, for her attention was mainly occupied with the dignified presence of the judge who occupied the bench.

"Let this young lady go into the witness-box," he ordered.

So Katey was forthwith conducted into the witness-box, and Jervis's senior counsel rose to elicit from her the story she had to tell.

"Your name is Katherine Vincent?" he began.

"Yes."

"And you are twenty-one years of age?"

"Yes."

"You became acquainted with the prisoner during the time that he was quartered at Danford?"

"Yes."

"You then lived with your uncle, Mr. Sylvester, of the Croft, Danford?"

"That is so."

"You were unusually attracted by the prisoner?"

"Yes."

"In short, he made love to you?"

"I thought so."

"And there were circumstances in your home life which made you anxious to leave it?"

"Yes."

"What were those circumstances?"

"I would rather not say. They can have nothing to do with this case."

"I am afraid you must answer my question."

"I would rather not."

"But I am afraid you must."

"Very well, sir, I will answer under protest. I should not have told this myself. My cousin, John Sylvester, the son of my uncle, proposed to marry me."

"I see. And you did not wish to marry him?"

"No."

"Was your uncle in favour of the marriage?"

"I cannot say. I should say not."

"Was your aunt, Mrs. Sylvester, in favour of the marriage?"

"Certainly not."

"Then she was very pleased that you refused her son?"

"I think she was pleased and offended at the same time. She was not very agreeable to me at that time."

"I see. On the day of the eleventh of November you made up your mind to leave Danford for ever."

"I did."

"And to travel to Blankhampton?"

"Yes."

"For the purpose of seeing the prisoner?"

"Yes."

"Were you engaged to the prisoner at that time?"

"No."

"But there had been love passages between you?"

"Yes."

"What made you go to him that night?"

"Because he had always said to me if ever I wanted a friend I was to go to him,—and I took him at his word."

"You went straight to him? To his quarters?"

"Yes."

"You were wearing a light grey ulster coat, with a large cape, which was lined with tartan silk?"

"Yes, I was wearing such a coat."

"It had been bought at Danford?"

"Yes."

"You wore it when you arrived at Blankhampton?"

"I did."

"You took a cab and drove straight to the barracks?"

"Yes."

"And you found Mr. Jervis away?"

"Yes, he was away; but he was expected back again that evening."

"So you waited for him?"

"Yes, I waited for him."

"Was he pleased to see you?"

"No, I cannot say that he was."

"What did he say to you?"

"He said that I must be mad."

"He thought it was a compromising thing for you to go to his quarters?"

"Yes, I believe he did. In fact, he told me so in plain terms—in very plain terms."

"Did he give you to understand that he had no intention of marrying you?"

"Yes."

"In very plain terms?"

"In very plain terms."

"But you had dinner with him?"

"Yes. He tried hard to persuade me that I should do best to go back to Danford again, and he thought

out a plan by which my people need know nothing of my journey and my intentions."

"Why did he not take you to an hotel?"

"He said that it was too late, that the fewer people who knew anything about it the better, and he offered to give me up his room, and to find accommodation in some other officer's quarters."

"I see. Then you still had dinner with him?"

"I was very hungry."

"Naturally, you were very hungry. You were also angry."

"I was very much hurt and disappointed."

"Why?"

"Because I had believed in his professions of affection for me."

"And you did not understand that Mr. Jervis was right in feeling angry and annoyed that you had done anything so foolish as to go to his quarters?"

"I don't think I did—not at that time, at all events."

"Ah! You had dinner together?"

"Yes."

"And did he remain with you afterwards?"

"He remained a little time."

"How long?"

"Perhaps an hour."

"You knew that he spoke of you to his servant as his sister?"

"Yes, I heard him say so."

"In fact, he did everything straightforwardly—you felt that he was acting in your interests?"

"Yes, very much so."

"And you agreed to go back to Danford by the first train in the morning?"

"The second in the morning."

"Oh! That left Blankhampton at what time?"

"I believe at about eight o'clock. Mr. Jervis thought that the first train was too early."

"Then you agreed to be called at a certain time, and for him to see you safely off on your return journey?"

"I did."

"You did not intend at that time to carry such a plan out?"

"No, I did not. I had made up my mind that I would not return to Danford."

"What did you intend to do?"

"I hardly knew. I said good-night to him, and locked the door of the bedroom, and sat by the fire thinking things over."

"And you made up your mind as to your plan of action during that time?"

"I did so."

"And to what did you make up your mind?"

"That I would go to London and try to find something to do to keep me."

"Did you carry that out?"

"I did. I waited till about three o'clock, when the whole block of buildings seemed to be perfectly quiet, and then I put my things on and went away."

"How did you get out?"

"I opened the door."

"But the main entrance of the officers' quarters, how did you get out of that?"

"It was quite simple. I found it open."

"Oh, you found the door open?"

"Yes."

"And how did you get through the entrance gate? Were you not challenged by the sentries on guard?"

"Yes, I was challenged, but I told them that I had been kept rather later than I expected, and they let me pass."

"And then you found yourself in the road?"

"Yes."

"What did you do then? There was no train at three o'clock in the morning."

"No, there was no train till half-past six."

"Then what did you do? It was the eleventh of November, the night must have been very dark and very cold."

"It was not very cold," said Katey, quietly.

"But what did you do with yourself?"

"I did not, you see, know my way," she answered, "and I walked along the road until I came to a bench where there was a young woman sitting, and I sat down upon it."

"Yes."

"I sat down and she spoke to me."

"Yes. What did she say?"

"She said 'Hullo! Are you on the tramp, too?' I said that I was for the present, that I was waiting to catch the first train to London. 'Ah,' said she, 'I wish I was waiting for anything as sensible. I'm waiting for a man who is tired of me. I only got here last night. I walked the last ten miles without stopping, and I must wait till daylight before I can see him.' 'Is he a soldier?' I asked. She said no, but that he was staying at an hotel in the town, that she had been a barmaid in London, and that this man, who was what she called on the road," Katey went on innocently, "was timed to be in Blankhampton the following day." 'I have been weeks getting here,' she said. 'I have no money, my boots are worn out, and my feet are blistered,—but he left me to die. I believed in him. I believed every word he said; but I'll have a reckoning with him before another twenty-hours have gone by.'"

"Did she tell you that person's name?"

"No."

"Why did you not ask it?"

"Because I was not sufficiently interested to wish to know. My mind was full of my own thoughts. And while we were sitting there, I asked her if she would let me lend her a little money to get a good break-

fast, because her case was something like mine,—or I thought so then,—and I was very sorry for her.”

“What was she like?”

“I could not tell you,” said Katey. “It was very dark, such a dark night, and there was no lamp where we were sitting ; but as we sat there and she told me more and more of her life, it came into my mind that perhaps I might change coats with her, for she seemed about my size, and I knew that if I went away in that conspicuous grey coat that I should be tracked to town and all my plans frustrated, and I had made up my mind that I would never go back to Danford again.”

“Then you proposed this plan to her?”

“Yes, I did.”

“Did she comply with your request?”

“Well, at first she seemed a little unwilling. She said to me, ‘My dear,’ and I thought it so odd of her to call me my dear,” Katey added, parenthetically, “‘you are a lady, I can tell by your voice. How come you to be out in the night like this? You have never done it before in your life.’ I told her that I never had, and she asked me how it had happened that I was in such a plight, then. I did not tell her everything—I could not,” said Katey, bitterly, “but I gave her an inkling of what had happened to me, and told her that I was going straight off to London and did not want to be traced. I said to her, ‘It is so dark you cannot see me, but this coat I am wearing is very light grey, and I am sure it will be noticed ; whereas, if anybody sees you in it, they will naturally believe it to be your own.’”

“And what did she say?”

“Well, she said she was willing enough to oblige me in the matter of the coat, only she was afraid I should find hers very shabby, as it had been but a cheap one when she left town, and she had walked nearly all the way to Blankhampton, and had

been wet through several times. I told her that I did not care anything about that, that I only cared to get away without being noticed, and so she consented to oblige me, and we changed coats; and then I gave her five shillings that she might get herself a decent breakfast and a wash-up, and so on, before she went to see this man."

"Then you only changed the coat?"

"I only changed the coat," said Katey.

"Then how was it that you let matters go so far before coming to explain that Katherine Vincent was really alive?"

"Because," she replied, "I only knew this morning that I was supposed to have been murdered, and that Mr. Jervis was suspected of having murdered me. You see, I went to London. I had a little money, and I was very fortunate—I got work almost at once."

"What work did you get?"

"I don't think," said Katey, with a certain amount of dignity, "that that affects this case at all. I am working, but not under my own name, as I did not wish to be traced. I was living very quietly, and I really had no interest in taking a newspaper, but this morning as I was going to re—I mean to business—I happened at Charing Cross station to hear a boy shouting out something about the Blankhampton murder case. I bought a paper of him out of the most idle curiosity, simply because I had once spent a few eventful hours in the town. To my horror, I discovered that the case was one being held on what was supposed to be my body, and that Mr. Jervis was suspected of having murdered me. I at once took a cab and rushed off to get leave to come down. I suppose I ought to have telegraphed, but I never thought of it until we had got past the last stopping-place. I was naturally very much excited when I got here, and the officials simply would not let me

in—I think they thought I was mad—but there are plenty of people in the court who will identify me as being really and truly Katherine Vincent.”

There was no cross-examination of this witness. She was formerly identified by her uncle, which was considered enough for all the needs of the case. She was commended and thanked by the great judge on the bench, and she was interviewed by some of the officials of the court, who told her that it would be imperatively necessary that she should leave her address with them in order that she might give evidence if the murderer of the dead girl should chance to be discovered. Then Jill Atkinson came and wept over her a little, and Lady Vivian invited her to go out to Ingleby and spend the night.

“You are very kind,” she said to her, “but I must get back. I have only a few hours’ leave, and now that I have publicly declared that I will not go back to Danford, I have only my own exertions to depend upon for a living, but it is very kind of you, Lady Vivian. I shall not forget it.”

At that moment a policeman appeared bringing her a little twisted note, and asking for a reply. She untwisted the bit of paper and read in Jervis’s well-known handwriting, “Let me know where you are staying. I will come to you as soon as I get out of this.—Yours, Phil.”

Miss Vincent thrust the note in her jacket pocket. “There is no answer, thank you,” she said, in a very cold voice. “Lady Vivian,” she continued, turning round and holding out both her hands to that hospitable lady, “I would have liked so much to come out to you for one night, but it cannot be. It is now,” consulting her watch, “five o’clock in the afternoon, and I have but bare time to get back to my work, which I must do if it is possible. Thank you very much for your kindness. And you, dear Jill, I shall never forget. Good-bye, darling, good-bye.”

She turned quickly away and passed out between the swing doors of the little waiting-room in which they were standing. Jill ran after her and caught her up as she was going swiftly along the wide corridor towards the courtyard. "Katey! Katey!" she said, "have you no message for him?"

Katey looked back and took hold of Jill's hand. "No, my dear, I have no message for him. I have saved his life, as it was my bounden duty to do, but he put a bar for ever between us when he answered my trust in such plain English on the night of the eleventh of November."

CHAPTER XXVI.

A DECLARATION.

"Turn, turn, my wheel! What is begun
At daybreak must at dark be done,
To-morrow will be another day."

KERANDS.

BUT Katey Vincent did not get away from Blankhampton without yet another attempt to bid her stay. As she came out of the refreshment room, followed by a boy with a well-filled lunch tray—for she had had nothing but a couple of buns since she had eaten her simple breakfast that morning—she ran up against John Sylvester, who was apparently looking seven ways for Sunday.

"Oh, I was just looking for you, Katey," he said; "where are you going?"

"I am going off by that train," said Katey, promptly.

"No, no, you can't do that," he cried, "now that we have found you again after so much grief, you

must come back to the hotel and meet the old people."

"That is very kind and hospitable of you, John, I am sure," said Katey, "but it is quite out of the question. I must be in London to-night without fail, and I am going by this train."

"But you can't go! You mustn't go!"

"I not only must, but I will," she replied firmly.

"But give me your London address."

"No, thank you, I can't do that."

"Katey, I must have it," he cried determinedly.

"Katey, I swear to you I have wept over the grave I thought was yours."

"You had no right to do so, John," said Katey, looking at him with cold and unappreciative eyes. "You know you have had this fancy for a little time, and that by it you made the only home I had perfectly unendurable to me. It is not so long since you hated me, since you took every opportunity of flouting and scorning me, of throwing my poverty and my dependence upon your father in my face. I am sorry to say this to you, John, for you did me the compliment of asking me to marry you; but I haven't forgotten the days when you used to twist my arms round and rap your knuckles on the fleshy part until I was mad with agony. I have not forgotten how you used to set booby-traps for me all over the place, and put bent pins into my chair, and sharps into my bed, to say nothing of cockroaches and dead mice and other such horrible things! No, John, you and I are going on totally different ways."

"But you must tell me," ignoring all these little recollections of the past, "you must tell me where you are and what you are doing for a livelihood."

"It is no business of yours," she said, looking at him straight in the eyes. "I have relieved your father from the necessity of keeping me. I shall no longer take money which should one day be yours. As to

your weeping over my grave, ah, it was like your cheek to do so! How dared you go and weep over my grave, John Sylvester?"

It must be confessed that at this exceedingly plain English John Sylvester nearly went into convulsions. Katey, however, relentlessly went on—and, let me tell you, there is nothing so relentless as a woman whom you have once ill-used—"You have hated me for years past. You made my girlhood miserable to me, you sneaked of me, you got me into all manner of trouble that would never have come near me but for you. You played every mean and dirty trick upon me that your mean mind could think of, and then you suddenly turned round, and you dared—yes, dared—to ask me to marry you—to ask me to go with my eyes wide open into the life of torture and slavery such as would have been my portion as your wife! And here you have been posing as the heart-broken and disconsolate lover—mine! And I say how dared you do so! Now, John Sylvester, you can go back to your father and mother and tell them what lies you like—tell them anything you please, but I go to London by this train, and I forbid you to follow me."

"I shall follow you," said he, in a determined tone.

"Then," she retorted, "if you ever utter or address one word to me, or you ever dare to press your acquaintance or your intentions upon me, I swear to you that I will give you in charge of the police. You asked me a question six months ago, and I answered it fair and square."

"Because you had a fancy for the other fellow."

"My fancy for any other fellow has nothing to do with you. If there were not another man in the world, John Sylvester, I would rather this moment choose death than dream of becoming your wife! There, is that plain enough for you?"

"Plain enough!" echoed John Sylvester, growing

whiter and whiter with each moment; "do you want to make me your enemy?"

"Yes," she cried, "I would rather have you for my enemy than for my so-called friend, and I shall suffer less so than if I were to accept the other alternative."

"And this is all for love of Jervis—the hound who scorned you when you went to him and cast your whole treasury before him!"

"No," said Katey, "it is nothing to do with Philip Jervis at all. I have read all the evidence of the case; I know what he says about me now, and I know what a mad thing I did to go to his rooms that night. If he had known you as well as I did, he would never have been angry with me for taking such an unwarrantable or idiotic course as I did. I have to thank you for the break between us two,—I have to thank you for my stealing away from the only home I had in the world,—I have to thank you for every unhappiness that has come to me since my father died, and yet you wonder that I hate and loathe you! Oh!" she went on, in tones of concentrated detestation, "if you only knew how I feel towards you, you would let your tongue shrivel in your mouth before you would ever utter one word to me again!"

She turned quickly round and hurried off towards the carriage, in which she had already secured a seat by the door.

"Now, my boy," she said, "put the lunch-basket there, and go to the book-stall and get me the 'Queen' and 'Lady's Pictorial,' and be sure you don't let the train go without my getting them."

The boy did her bidding, while John Sylvester stood afar off watching her with hungry eyes. When the door was shut, however, and the ticket inspectors had passed her compartment by, he once more drew near to her. "Katey," he said, in an undertone, for

there were two respectable women in the other end of the carriage, "Have you nothing to say more to me?"

"No, nothing that you could wish to hear," said Katey.

"But to think of you travelling like this—third class!" he said, contemptuously. "Oh, Katey, I will take you first class for the rest of your life, if you would only give yourself to me."

"And I," said Katey, "would rather travel in the guard's van or in a cattle truck, or any other uncomfortable and hideous form of locomotion that you might suggest, than I would travel first-class until eternity side by side with you. There, have I spoken plainly enough?"

John Sylvester thrust his lowering face in at the window and hissed into her ear, "If you can speak plainly, Katey, so can I, and I swear to you now that you may be as bitter and as slighting as you like, but you shall end as my wife. I will win you in spite of yourself! I swear it!"

She drew back from the window, and at that moment the train began to move on. John Sylvester kept pace for a few steps, hissing out, "You have not seen the last of me, remember. I have sworn it!" And then a guard pulled him back with a word of admonition, and Katey drew up the window, thankful to be off at last.

"You know, young gentleman," said the guard, "there's many an accident happens just like that, and then we gets blamed. You ought to know better!"

But John Sylvester never moved or took the slightest notice until the train was gone and the guard with it. Then he wheeled round and tore out of the station. He was, in fact, just whisking through the commodious booking-office when he ran plump against Jervis, who, the moment he had been released from durance vile, had rushed off to the station in

order to stop Katey, whom he had guessed would leave by that train.

"You are too late!" shouted John Sylvester, in a triumphant tone. "You are too late! She wants none of us—neither you nor me."

"Speak for yourself, my friend," said Jervis, deliberately. "It is quite understandable that Miss Vincent does not want you—I would not if I were her."

"You villain," thundered John Sylvester, almost foaming in his rage. "You villain! I have you to thank for the wreck and ruin of my life, and I will pay my debt—God help me!—if I live."

"Then," said Jervis, gathering himself together and letting fly hard from the shoulder, "you may as well have to thank me for the wreck and ruin of your body, likewise!" and the next moment John Sylvester was sprawling on the pavement. Yet in spite of this interesting little episode, which gave vent to a good many of the feelings which Jervis had been bottling up during the past four months, he was no further on his way than he had been when he entered that station, for Katey's train was gone and Katey had gone with it. As soon as Jervis realised this, he turned back and sought out the telegraph office, from which he sent a message to a private detective in town, bidding him meet the train at the London terminus and find out the home of the young lady, whose description he gave at considerable length.

"Now, I think," said he to himself, "that I shall have something to go upon."

At the foot of the telegram he had written, "Am telegraphing you ten pounds. If not sufficient to follow up enquiry, let me know. Also wire result of investigation immediately to Cavalry Barracks, Blankhampton."

He felt, on the whole, more at peace with himself than he had been at any time since he had been recalled from Listower Castle. He noticed as he

passed out through the booking-office that John Sylvester was still standing there, looking very blue and angry, and a railway-policeman came up to him and asked him if he was the gentleman that had knocked the other gentleman down just now. Jervis looked at him and said, "My name is Jervis, and you will find me at the Cavalry Barracks if you want me. But I don't think that the gentleman—as you are pleased to call him—will be likely to trouble me, or, under the particular circumstances of the case, that any magistrate would convict me of having assaulted him."

Then he hailed a hansom and got into it, leaving the policeman more favourably impressed by his extreme coolness than by the blustering, almost voiceless passion of the ill-used John Sylvester. From the station he drove straight to the barracks, where a regular ovation awaited him from all sorts and conditions of the White Horse, and after listening to the many pleasant things that his comrades had to say, one of his brother officers told him that the Vivians, together with Lord and Lady Lucifer and several other of the most important people in the neighbourhood, were coming up at six o'clock specially to offer him their congratulations. Almost as he spoke, the party were announced, and he then saw Jill's bright and pleasant face just behind Lady Vivian's portly presence.

"My dear Mr. Jervis!" said Lady Vivian, almost embracing him,—indeed, I think with a little encouragement that kindly lady would have enfolded him entirely in her voluminous garments of velvet and fur,—“How pleased I am I cannot tell you! I assure you that Sir Thomas has not slept, except by fits and starts, since he first had to put his name to that dreadful paper, and my little Jill here has been almost heart-broken about you! She would have done anything to get out of giving her evidence,

and you must have seen for yourself how distressed and unwilling she was to say a single word which might by any possibility be twisted into something which might tell against you. Of course, we all knew—we all felt that there could be no real blame attached to you.”

“And yet, Lady Vivian,” said Jervis, holding her hand and looking at her with a quizzical smile, “and yet, if Miss Vincent had not opportunely turned up, I should now——”

“Oh, don’t talk about it,” Lady Vivian cried.

And then Lady Lucifer came up to him and caught him by both hands. “You know how glad I am! You know how I believed in you!” she exclaimed. “As if a man of our class would ever do such a thing under any circumstances! But jurymen are such blocks, such fools, and upon my word judges are not much better! I told the Lord Chief at the breakfast—the Mansion House breakfast, you know,—I told him then that there couldn’t be a suspicion against you, and do you think I made any impression upon him? Not a bit of it! I assure you I wasted my whole time simply blarneying him, simply pouring out blandishments upon him—I even schemed to get myself put next to him, and for all the good it did I might just as well have stayed at home! Even supposing that I did not do any actual harm by it.”

“Oh, no, no, a man like that goes by the evidence, and upon my word, Lady Lucifer, I assure you it was so black against me that I began to be doubtful whether I really had done it or not.”

“Oh, no, you didn’t! That is absolute nonsense! Oh, no, you never thought so! But still, I must confess at one time it really did look black.”

“Yes, I should think it did,” said Jervis, “a good deal blacker than I liked. However, it is all over now, and my friends need not worry about me any longer.”

"You will come out and dine with us to-night?" said Lady Vivian, hospitably.

"Not to-night, Lady Vivian, thanks. I must dine here. I fancy all my brother officers expect it of me. At any other time you know how delighted I am to come to Ingleby. Ah, Miss Jill, and how are you after all the excitement of the past three days?"

"I feel," said Jill, in a shaking voice, "as if I would rather die than go through it again,—and the relief when Katey came into court,—oh! have you seen her? Did you see her?"

"No," said Jervis, "she has gone back to London."

"Then what are you going to do, Mr. Jervis?" asked Lady Vivian.

"I am going to find her," said Jervis, "if I can."

"And marry her?" said Lady Vivian, in a rather colder voice.

"If she will have me," returned Jervis, without hesitation.

CHAPTER XXVII.

SEARCHEM, LONDON.

"A certain amount of opposition is a great help to a man. Kites fly against the wind."

NEAL.

WHEN all the gay people who had gone in a body to the Cavalry Barracks that they might in person offer their congratulations to the hero of the day, had betaken themselves away to their respective homes, Jervis was free for the first time to go off to his own quarters and have half an hour to himself. It was unspeakably sweet to him to be free once more, and perhaps the delight of his freedom was enhanced by the summary justice which he had

meted out to his rival and Katey's enemy—John Sylvester. He found his rooms looking as if he had only left them the previous day, and Tinker was just putting his master's clothes out with his usual stolid and sturdy air. "Hullo, Tinker!" said Jervis, in his pleasant and easy voice, "How are you getting on?"

"Well, sor," answered Tinker, stiffening himself and saluting his master, "I am getting on all right now, sor; but it's been weary work waiting for the chance of welcoming you back again."

"It has been a deal wearier work for me, Tinker," returned Jervis, with a short laugh.

"I can well believe that same, sor," said Tinker.

"Were you in court this afternoon?" Jervis enquired.

"I was, sor."

"Pretty near shave, wasn't it?"

"It was that same, sor," said Tinker.

"Well, I've got a letter or two to write, so you can just put out my things and bring me a glass of brown sherry."

"Yes, sor," answered Tinker, relapsing once more into the usual stolidity of the soldier-servant.

As the man left the room, Jervis sat himself down in his own especial chair and lit his pipe. He had been so long in durance vile that as yet he could hardly realise that he was here, back in his own quarters, a free man, fully exonerated from even a shadow of the horrible crime which had hung over him ever since the day when that poor bruised and battered body had been flung up at the water-gate of Ingleby. He looked around. There was Katey's photograph in its silver frame still standing in its accustomed place on his smoking table, while one or two other portraits of her graced the chimney shelf. The invitation rack was still filled with old invitation cards and notes, and everything had quite its usual appearance. Tinker on his way back from the court

had bought a couple of flowering plants and a bunch of daffodils and narcissi, which he had stuck stiffly into a high vase. Jervis drew a long breath as he looked round, and felt that it was good to be at home again, even though, at that moment, home meant to him only the circumscribed area of a soldier's quarters.

The evening that followed was tedious enough. He went down to the ante-room in good time for dinner to find that the events of the day had given rise to an impromptu guest-night. He found himself placed at dinner next to the counsel who had defended him and seated at the right hand of the Colonel—"John Chinaman." They sat long and late. Everybody made speeches and everybody told stories, and the evening was one of hilarious congratulation and enjoyment. Colonel Weaver-Marsston himself bloomed out in a quite unheard of manner, and even went the length of telling several more or less risky stories, at which his officers laughed to a man with a heartiness which made the Colonel quite proud of himself. Poor man! He had not the slightest idea that they were chestnuts of many seasons ago, or that the laughter was as much for that reason as for the fact that it was he who told them. They drank toasts to everybody at the table, or nearly so, and to a great many people who were not present, including a bumper and no heel-taps to the charming presence of Miss Katey Vincent; and after they had left the dinner-table and adjourned to the ante-room, and some of them to the billiard-room adjoining, the hero of the day was a great deal joked about that same young lady.

"You know, old fellow, she is awfully pretty," said one of his brother officers.

"Yes, I know she is awfully pretty," answered Jervis civilly.

"Of course, you will put a proper period to the story?"

"I don't know what you mean," said Jervis, wilfully misunderstanding him.

"Well, you will make a match of it?"

"I think not," said Jervis.

"Really?"

"Oh, well," said he, "you know I am quite willing to make a match of it, but I am afraid Miss Vincent has given me up as a bad job, and I don't wonder. I was a brute to her that night. If I had been half a man, I should have just settled the wedding-day there and then, instead of being so infernally proper. But—but—" he added, "I can tell you this, old fellow, that I have done my last at the extreme propriety dodge. It don't pay!"

It was close on midnight ere he received a telegram from the detective agency to which he had wired instructions concerning Katey. He opened the tan-coloured envelope with a shaking hand, but, alas, only disappointment awaited him! "Extremely sorry," it ran, "but owing to pressure of business, your instructions were not received in time for our representative to meet the train. Think lady will be easy to trace. We have already set to work to trace out all cabs leaving terminus at that hour. Kindly write us fullest instructions and particulars as to lady's appearance, dress, and anything personal about her that you can inform us of. If possible, we should prefer a personal visit. Can you come to London, or shall we send a representative down to you?—Searchem, London."

Jervis thrust the disappointing missive into the breast of his waistcoat. So he would have to wait perhaps for months until he could have a clue of Katey. Really, it was hard; but then, it was no use advertising. He knew that as she was feeling, no advertisement, no pleading that he could put forward would have any effect upon her; and he went back to the billiard-table with the first cloud upon his face

that had rested there since the termination of the trial. Later on, he found himself quite near to the Colonel.

"Jervis, my dear chap," he said, taking him affectionately by the arm, "I have not perhaps said as much as I might have done, but you know—you must know—how thoroughly glad I am for your own sake, and for ours and for the sake of the regiment, that everything is cleared up. I, of course, as I told you some days ago, have never had the slightest doubt of your integrity; but it is so much more satisfactory to have you cleared absolutely and without reserve in the eyes of the whole world. Now, my dear chap, if there is anything you want, you need only speak to me. If you would like to take the rest of your leave, you have only to say so."

Now, probably in the whole annals of the British Service, there has hardly ever been such a thing known as a man being offered leave which he was not willing to take, always supposing, that is, that he had no special reason for wishing to spend it in the town in which he was then quartered. Therefore, Jervis said with real gratitude that he would be very pleased indeed to take the rest of his leave, and added, with a short laugh, that he had been afraid to think of it, fearing that after so prolonged an absence from his regiment he would be expected no longer to shirk his duties.

"But you have not been away exactly on pleasure, Jervis, my dear fellow," said John Chinaman blandly.

"No, that is true, sir. A worse time I never put in in my life. On my word, I think I would sooner have had a spell of hard labour; I should have felt that I had something to do, rather than sitting there waiting for one's fate. It was simply horrible!"

"I can quite understand it," said the Colonel. "Then you had better have ten days' leave at once, and apply for the rest."

"Thank you, sir, very much," said Jervis. "Then I may make arrangements for going away—say to-morrow?"

"Yes, any time after noon."

This, of course, simplified matters a good deal, as instead of having to write to Messrs. Searchem & Co., giving them the full particulars of Katey's appearance, height, age, tricks of manner, speech, and general history, he was able during the following morning to send them a telegram saying that he would be with them between eleven and twelve the next day; and if he did not feel exactly gay when he once more bade adieu to the regiment and started off for London town, he certainly carried with him the (in his case) somewhat doubtful blessing of a good conscience. Still, he had been sufficiently long in durance vile to take a very real pleasure in the simple fact of freedom—in being able to go to London, in being able to pay for his own railway ticket, in being able to get into a hansom cab. I have never been in prison myself, but I should say there is no time when a hansom cab is so truly delightful than after a spell of that particular kind of lodging, whether deserved or undeserved. At all events, Jervis found it so, and he went off to his accustomed quarters feeling solidly satisfied if not brilliantly happy and gay.

It was then nearly dinner time. He dressed and dined, and went off to a theatre, where almost the first person he saw, in a box just above him, was his friend, Mrs. Paget. Need I say that she was all smiles and welcome and tenderness. She had only with her a youngish lady, who was engrossed with a little flirtation on her own account, and she and the other party to the flirtation leant over the front of the box and flirted to their heart's content behind the screen of a big feather fan, while Mrs. Paget sat well back behind the curtain, and gave Jervis a full account—a detailed

account of what her feelings, her hopes and fears, and her distress had been during the past terrible weeks.

"Of course," she said, as an ending, "the creature could not do less than come forward, but it was all nonsense about her not having known of the murder and of the trial because everybody knew of it! England simply rang with it from one end to the other."

"I don't think so," said Jervis, in a chilled voice. "And, of course, Miss Vincent *did* come forward, that is the main thing."

"Yes, but only just in time," said Mrs. Paget, with acidity. "I daresay that if she had not felt that things were going against you, she would have let the trial go through on its own merits; and, of course, everybody said it looked black—indeed it *did* look black."

"I know it looked black," said Jervis; "but I don't think that Miss Vincent had anything to do with that."

"Of course, you will never have anything to do with such a creature again?" said she.

"Well, it is rather a question of her not having anything to do with me, you see."

"Why?"

"Because she wouldn't even wait to speak to me after the trial was over."

"Ashamed to see you, I should think," said Mrs. Paget, in a lofty tone.

"Oh, I don't think so," said Jervis mildly. "I believe she is very angry with me, and I don't know but that she was perfectly right. In fact, the more I think about it, the more convinced I am that she *was* right."

"To come to your rooms?"

"Well, no, no; she herself admits that, now; but she had every right to be angry, because I behaved very badly to her."

"You don't really care for her?" murmured Mrs. Paget, in a very tender tone.

"Well, I am afraid I do," he admitted.

"Oh, yes, in a way; but not as you care for others?"

"In a very different way to what I care for others," he said, nursing his knee and smoothing one thumb over the other.

"Not better?" said Mrs. Paget, sharply.

Jervis turned and looked at her. "Well, look here, my dear friend," he said, quietly, "we have been great friends, you and I, for a long time, and I think I ought to be frank with you—I shall marry Miss Vincent if she will have me. I am only afraid that she won't."

"What, after everything?"

"Yes, after everything."

"Then you and I are to be friends no longer?" she said, in a dangerously seductive voice.

"Well, we have been very good friends," said Jervis, "very good friends, and I hope we shall always be the same."

"You would hardly ask me to be friendly with that kind of person?" said Mrs. Paget, in a tone of suppressed anger.

"My dear little woman, Miss Vincent is not that kind of person at all. You altogether misunderstand the situation; she is as innocent as a child and as good as gold; she is very unworldly, or she would never have been so foolish as to compromise herself, and it is more than probable that if I found out where she is at present that she will scout the idea of having anything whatever to do with me. As to its making any difference between us, why should it make any difference any more than your husband has made? I have admired you very much. I admire you just as much now," which, by the bye, was not quite true, but, of course, it isn't always

politic for a man to say exactly what he thinks to a lady in society.

"Oh, yes, yes, yes, I quite agree with all that you say. It is very beautiful of you to feel like this, but I must decline at any time to receive that young lady, and, of course, it is better you should know it. You know perfectly well, Phil, that I am very particular about the people I know."

A sudden sense of the comic side of the situation rushed into Jervis's mind, a sense of the comparison between a pot and a kettle, but he choked it down, and answered her smoothly and kindly enough. "Well," he said, "I hope you won't find it necessary to throw me over, because I value your friendship very much."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

REED & SHUTTLEWORTH.

"Always there is a black spot in our sunshine, and it is even as I have said, the shadow of ourselves."

CARLYLE.

WITH all a soldier's punctuality, Jervis appeared at the offices of Messrs. Searchem & Co. a few minutes after the clock had struck eleven the following morning. After the usual preliminaries which are necessary to effect an entrance into any office of importance, he was ushered into the presence of the eminent detective. He found him a middle-sized, slight, keen-eyed, lantern-jawed man with a very smooth face. When I say him, I mean Mr. Searchem, who, to all intents and purposes, constituted the firm. Mr. Searchem got up and bowed to his new client.

"Really, Mr. Jervis, I cannot sufficiently express my annoyance that your telegram was too late to be of any real service to us," he said, as Jervis seated himself. "You see, it was in this way. We have two or three very difficult cases on just now, and our strength was entirely taken up. I had nobody here just at that hour but the caretaker, who naturally has nothing to do with letters. My chief assistant returned just in time to find that he could not possibly catch that train."

"But I thought you were going to search out all the cabs?"

"So we did. We spotted the young lady, oh, yes, but she only took a cab to Charing Cross underground, and at that hour in the evening, when all the theatres are closing, there is such a rush, that the fact of a young lady travelling with no more impedimenta than a little bag would attract no notice unless she had been watched for. At Charing Cross, we lost all trace of her—for the time being, that is."

"Yes; and I should think it would be rather difficult to pick up again," said Jervis, with a fine air of indifference.

"Well, so far as that particular journey goes, I have no doubt that it is practically impossible; but then there are many other ways of tracing persons whom we wish to find. I think you said that Miss Vincent had reddish brown hair?"

"Yes, a bright bronze brown—almost red."

"Of course," said Mr. Searchem confidently, "if you would just tell me everything there is to know about the whole affair and give me every detail of her dress and appearance and so on, we should have a better chance of doing something quickly."

"My dear sir," said Jervis, "I will tell you everything that there is to know about her. Of course, you have read the case in which I was tried for the murder of a young lady, who eventually appeared in

court and gave evidence that she was very much alive and well?"

"Of course," said Mr. Searchem.

"She explained, as you have seen, exactly how the murdered girl came to be wearing a part of her clothes, and she immediately disappeared after the trial, and I missed her train by a couple of minutes. That was when I wired to you."

"True. Then Miss Vincent was the last person who saw this dead girl alive, barring the man who killed her?"

"Yes, I suppose that is so."

"The last person of whom they have any evidence?"

"Precisely so."

"Then why do you do not enquire of the officials of the court-house in Blankhampton?"

"I never thought of it."

"Because, of course, they would not allow her to leave the town without some means of communicating with her in case further evidence concerning the murdered girl should crop up."

"I suppose not."

"I am sure of it. Now, the best thing that we can do is to telegraph to one of the court officials and see if we cannot get the address that she probably gave them, in which case our work would be very easy."

"And supposing that they won't give it up?"

"My dear sir, they have no interest in keeping it. Of course, she may not have given her own address, that I could not say anything about, but, in the course of an hour or two, we could learn something or other. If you will excuse me, I will send off the telegram now."

So while Jervis sat back in his chair and admired the general aspect of the eminent detective's room, Mr. Searchem indited the following telegram—
"Searchem & Co., London, to Inspector Gallagher, Blankhampton. Can you give us the address left by

Miss Vincent when in Blankhampton the day before yesterday? Most important that we know it as soon as possible. Kindly wire. Reply paid."

"Gallaghan is sure to know it, and if not he can find it out. He is a very good friend of mine and will do anything reasonable that he is asked to do," said Mr. Searchem; then looking up at Jervis with a quite professional interest. "You know, Mr. Jervis, you had a very near shave the other day."

"My dear sir," said Jervis, "I had such a very near shave that I am not quite sure whether I am awake or dreaming yet," with a short laugh. "The jury had actually given their verdict."

"Yes. Ah, well, juries are not——"

"Well, now," said Jervis, crossing one leg over the other and speaking very much *de haut en bas*, "I know it is the fashion to say that juries are block-heads and always give their verdict in absolute contradiction to all evidence and common sense, but for my own part, I should have been very much astonished if they had given a verdict in my favour. I assure you I sat there and listened to the extraordinary string of evidence that they had gathered up against me till I was perfectly bewildered. 'Pon my word, it looked as black as night, and so much of it was true that you really could not blame anybody for believing that it was not also."

"Yes, but it must have been a great relief when the young lady did turn up."

"I grant you," said Jervis. "I was in no sort of a funk, but, at the same time, I can assure you I haven't the slightest desire to try the effect of hanging as a change of sensation. Beastly uncomfortable way of dying, I should think. Well, I don't see the good of my waiting here until you get a reply to that telegram. Will you send it down to my rooms? Or, still better, send it to my club—the Junior Army and Navy."

"Yes."

"And meantime you will do everything apart from that to facilitate matters."

"Oh, certainly. Of course, with us professional honour is the sharpest possible spur," said Mr. Searchem, taking the hand which Jervis held out.

He went back to his desk after the door had closed behind his visitor and sat for a few minutes idly drawing little sketches upon his blotting pad. They were rough sketches of little gibbets, and presently Mr. Searchem delivered himself of a confidential and truly appropriate remark—"Now it would have been a thousand pities to let that fine fellow swing for a crime that he never did. That is where the police system makes such a mistake. They give their detectives wages instead of paying them by piecework. A great mistake—a great mistake. However, we've got to find the young lady, that is very certain, and then I suppose it will be wedding bells and all that sort of thing. I wonder he can give a second thought to such a young hussey myself! However, we have all got a soft spot somewhere, every man-jack of us, and I suppose that's his."

In due time the answer came back from Inspector Gallagher. "Miss Vincent's address obtainable through Reed & Shuttleworth, Pipe Court, E. C."

Mr. Searchem on receiving this telegram looked at his watch. It was then close upon lunch time, and the restaurant at which he usually partook of that meal was within a stone's throw of Messrs. Reed & Shuttleworth's offices, therefore, instead of going straight to the restaurant as he usually did, he passed the door and made his way into Pipe Court.

The clerk who answered his first enquiry told him that Mr. Reed was out of town, and that Mr. Shuttleworth was just going out to lunch.

"Oh, well, tell Mr. Shuttleworth that Mr. Searchem would be glad to speak to him for half a minute. I

won't keep him. In fact, I am just going to lunch myself."

"Very good, sir," answered the clerk, and disappeared into another room.

After a minute's interval he came back and invited Mr. Searchem to "Step this way!" which Mr. Searchem naturally did, and thereupon found himself in the presence of a tall, sharp-eyed, keen-faced young man, who asked him without any circumlocution what he could have the pleasure of doing for him.

"A very small thing, indeed," said Mr. Searchem, with a genial air, which sat somewhat awkwardly upon his sharp angles. "A client of mine is very anxious to obtain the address of Miss Vincent, who figured in the Blankhampton murder case the other day."

"What is your client's name?" Mr. Shuttleworth enquired.

"Well, he is the principal party interested in the case. In fact, it is Mr. Jervis himself."

"Oh, the man who was tried for the murder! I see. Well, I am very sorry I can't give it to you."

"But they telegraphed to me from Blankhampton that she had left her address at your offices."

"Yes, we know Miss Vincent's address, but except for the fact that she may be required to give evidence as being the last person who was known to have seen the unfortunate girl who was murdered alive, she does not wish her address to be known or herself to be traced, and I have the strictest orders from her not to divulge it to any other person than an official at Blankhampton, more particularly not to Mr. Jervis."

"H'm! Well, that is a pity—a pity! He is a fine, well-set-up young fellow enough."

"No doubt he is," said Mr. Shuttleworth, drily. "He may be the most wonderful young man under heaven, but my client's instructions are definite, and

having accepted the trust, of course, you must understand perfectly well that I am not inclined to break it."

"No, of course not! Of course not! Well, I am very much obliged to you, I am sure. It is a pity—a great pity. He is very keen on getting her address, and it is a pity."

"Well, I daresay it *is* a pity," said Mr. Shuttleworth, "but I can't help you."

"No, to be sure not. Well, good-morning—good-morning! Glad to have met you."

"And I, you," said Mr. Shuttleworth, easily. "Your name, of course, is very familiar to me. I hope we shall do more business next time—eh?"

"Well, I am sure I hope so, too," said Mr. Searchem, who hated coming to a dead wall of this description.

He had no choice, however, but to telegraph the message and the information which he had not elicited on to his client at the Junior Army and Navy. And then he went and ate his mid-day meal, not a little disturbed by the annoyance of having managed to elicit no information from Mr. Shuttleworth.

It must be confessed that Mr. Searchem was not above indirect means of acquiring information. He had gone fair and square to Messrs. Reed & Shuttleworth, and these gentlemen, in the person of the junior partner, had not responded to his overtures. He therefore, on returning to his own offices, gave one of his myrmidons instructions to go down to Pipe Court, and try if he could not squeeze the information out of one of the underlings in Messrs. Reed & Shuttleworth's offices. He did not exactly tell as much to Jervis when he saw him again, of course. It doesn't do for detectives to explain their exact methods to their clients. Messrs. Searchem & Co. were not at all that class of business men. He set various other machinery in motion, but he got no

nearer to seeking out the young lady who was known in London by some other name than that of Katey Vincent.

The following morning Jarvis appeared at Searchem's office again, but there was no news awaiting him. He heard of Mr. Searchem's failure to elicit Katey's address, and had really no choice than to leave him to solve the mystery in his own fashion, but as he was walking leisurely along towards Somerset House on his return to the West End, a bright idea struck him—he would write to Katey, and he would go down himself to Pipe Court and see if he could not get this Shuttleworth to at least deliver a letter to her. So thinking, he hailed a cab and drove off to his club, where he wrote as follows:

“MY VERY DEAR KATEY,—I am sorry you did not wait to see me before you left Blankhampton; first, that I might tender to you my thanks for having released me from an exceedingly unpleasant situation, and, secondly, that I might have expressed to you in person my exceeding joy to find that, after having grieved for you with all my heart, you were alive and well. Do you know that I went—in custody, if you please!—to Ingleby Church, where I saw the poor girl who was buried in place of you. Of course, she was pretty much altered, and there was really nothing but her masses of wonderful hair—precisely like your own—which could in any way be recognisable. I did notice that her hands were very large, but the woman who had done her best to make her presentable in her coffin, assured me that that was the effect of the water in which she had been so long, and I went away never doubting but that I had really seen the last of yourself. My dear child, I must, if possible, see you. I know that you don't want your people to trace you, but with me your address will naturally be as safe as possible. There is so much that I cannot tell you herein. Letters are most unsatisfactory things, though sometimes they are safer than personal interviews, as, for instance, my dear child, if you had written to me instead of coming, it would have been wiser, and we should both have been spared much pain and suffering. Still, at the present time, if I were to write everything I could never, I think, make you understand how utterly and entirely I have regretted my harsh words to you the night that you came to me. You must have realised by this time that it was because of my affection for you that I was seemingly so unkind, my fear for your good name, my desire that nothing should happen to you which could afterwards be thrown at you as a reproach. I had to steel myself against you. Perhaps you will never

understand and perhaps you will never believe, but it is possible that some day you may know what a really foolish thing you did in taking me at my word so very literally. Of course, I meant you to take me at my word, but not in that particular way. I know that I said all sorts of the most fearfully unkind things to you that night, things that I no more meant, than I meant that you should have the fate that we all thought you had met. I don't ask you to disclose even your address to me if you would rather not do so, nor the name under which you are now living, but I do ask you to come and meet me anywhere that you like to name, and I will give you my word of honour after the interview that I will not follow you or try to trace you home. But see me, you must, if only for once. I have had so much time alone since that dreadful night, so much time to think over what I did and what I ought to have done, so much regret has filled my heart, and I want to see you, Katey. Surely after all I have gone through and suffered—and let me tell you that it is no joke being week after week in prison, not knowing whether you will get scragged at the end or not.

“And I am, as ever,

“Your real friend,

“PHIL.”

Armed with this missive he got into a cab and drove down to Pipe Court, where he found out the offices of Messrs. Reed & Shuttleworth.

CHAPTER XXIX.

A FRAYED CORD.

“There are souls in this world that have the gift of finding joy everywhere.”

FABER.

WHEN Jervis reached the offices of Messrs. Reed & Shuttleworth, he discovered the same boy that Mr. Searchem had done on the occasion of his visit to that locality.

“I want to see Mr. Reed or Mr. Shuttleworth.”

“Mr. Reed is aw'y, sir,” returned the boy, promptly.

"Then I will see Mr. Shuttleworth, if you will take my card to him."

"I am afraid Mr. Shuttleworth is eng'yged."

"Then I will wait until he isn't engaged," returned Jervis, quietly appropriating the nearest chair.

The boy disappeared with the card into the inner room, shut the door behind him, reappearing a moment later with the information that Mr. Shuttleworth would see the gentleman in a minute. After which he began laboriously polishing up a penny as if dear life depended upon his getting it clean by a certain time, and after a minute or two had gone by, a little bell in the inner room rang, whereupon the boy jumped down from his high stool, gave his hands a promiscuous wipe up and down the sides of his trousers, and ushered Jervis into the lawyer's presence.

"Good-morning," said the lawyer.

"Good-morning," said Jervis. "I suppose I need not explain to you who I am?"

"No; I presume you are the Mr. Jervis whose name has been in the papers so much of late."

"Yes, I am. Well, I came down not to take up your time, but to ask you a favour."

"Certainly, and may I ask what that is?"

"Well, I want, as probably you know already, Miss Vincent's present address, which I am told you cannot give me, but one thing you might do, and I think without any detriment to your honour. Will you give Miss Vincent a letter from me?"

The lawyer looked at the soldier for a moment without replying. "Well, I do not see that there is any reason why I should not do so," he replied, civilly.

Jervis immediately took the letter from his breast pocket. "Then if you will do so, I shall be exceedingly obliged to you."

He handed the letter to the lawyer and, bidding him good-morning, betook himself away. Then he

walked out into the street again with the feeling that he had to get through a certain amount of time before he could reasonably receive an answer. It was then but a little past noon; the lawyer, he reflected, would probably post it to Katey tolerably soon, who might or might not get it in time to reply that day. He sauntered up to his club feeling as if he wished the road was twice as long that he might be twice as long in getting there, but the longest walk, even in the crowded London streets, comes to an end, and he found himself turning into the well-known entrance hall before one of the clock had struck.

His first instinct was naturally to find out whether there were any letters for him. There were several, but the first one that he opened was a letter from Mrs. Paget, charmingly scented, and somewhat penitent in tone—"Why have you never been near me since that wretched night at the theatre?" she began. "I have been haunted ever since by a feeling that I was unkind to you, and perhaps that I said too much. It is because of my great interest in you, my dear Phil, that I resent anything which falls heavily upon you. Don't quarrel with me for the sake of any one. I shall be at home to lunch every day this week."

Now when a man has been some weeks in prison, although only enjoying those hardships which the waiting of an enquiry demands, he is naturally not given to carping and quarrelling when he finds himself once more among his own kind, and particularly such of his kind as desire to be on the best of terms with him. "Poor little woman!" his thoughts ran, "I daresay she was a little jealous! Perhaps it was rather rough on her suddenly to find out there was some one else. Just one o'clock!" glancing at his watch; "I think I will go along and see her, now. She is sure to have something on this afternoon. It will help me to get through the day." So instead

of lingering any longer in the club, Jervis jumped into a hansom and drove off to Mrs. Paget's house.

She received him, so to speak, with open arms. "My dear boy!" she said, "How nice of you to come along so soon! I really thought I had vexed you fearfully the other night. Yes, Maudie is still staying here. Her man is coming to lunch. Oh, the husband? He is—golfing, I think. We'll go somewhere altogether this afternoon, all of us. Where shall we go?"

"I am quite at your service," said Jervis.

"Well, Mrs. Fitz-Hardinge has a party, and Zi-Zi is going to sing, but we need not go to that till nearly five o'clock. Let us do something mad—something wild!"

Jervis could not help laughing. "My dear little woman," he said, "I will do the maddest thing that you like. Let us go to Madame Tussaud's. I am sure you have never been."

"Never!" said Mrs. Paget, without hesitation.

"There is a great deal to see," said Jervis, "and but for a lucky chance, I should already have been figuring there myself by this time. Let us go immediately after lunch and do the thing thoroughly well."

"We will talk to the others about it," said she, turning back to the fire. "By the bye, what have you been doing since I saw you?"

"Doing? Loafing, generally. Seeing my lawyers, and trying to settle up all sorts of unpleasant business."

She wanted to ask him if he had seen Katey, but she did not quite like to do so. "Have you seen any one you know?"

"H'm, yes, one or two. I dined with Drummond last night, and we looked in at a couple of music-halls afterwards."

"Evidently," thought Mrs. Paget, "he has not seen

her." She was discreet enough, however, not to mention Katey in any way, and while they were still standing there, the man of whom Mrs. Paget had spoken and whom Jervis had seen with them in the theatre, was announced—Sir Richard Trevanion.

"I hope I am not late," he said to her.

"Not at all. You know lunch is quite a movable feast in this house, and Maudie has not come down yet. You have met Mr. Jervis before, haven't you? We have been talking about what we will do this afternoon. Mr. Jervis proposes we shall go and try to find his likeness in the Chamber of Horrors at Madame Tussaud's, and then we might go on to Mrs. Fitz-Hardinge's party. Zi-Zi is going to sing at half-past five, and we must be there for that. What do you think of the plan?"

"I think it perfectly charming," said Sir Richard Trevanion, who would have thought a stroll through Covent Garden market charming in the presence of Miss Maud Allister. "I should think," he added, in a very indifferent tone, which covered not a little anxiety, "that we might do the expedition in a couple of hansom cabs, eh, Mrs. Paget?"

"I don't see why not," said Mrs. Paget, looking at Jervis.

"On the contrary, I think there is every reason why we should," was Jervis's comment.

Then Miss Allister appeared, and to her also was communicated the programme for the day. It was, however, very make-believe gaiety for Jervis, who was consumed with impatience that the hours might go by until the time came when he might reasonably expect a reply from Katey. Mrs. Paget flattered herself that she was acting very judiciously. She was very sweet and tender to him without being as affectionate as was her wont. She ordered up some of the best claret for lunch, and when her glass was first filled, looked towards him as she raised it to

her lips—"My congratulations to you on your good fortune," she said, in a plaintive little voice. And somehow, when Jervis remembered what a shock the whole story must have been to her, believing that he was hers and hers only, her "best man" so to speak, he could not help feeling just a little bit choky about the throat and just a little bit misty about the eyes. You see, men are but men after all, and he was haunted by a feeling that it would be best and wisest and kindest to let this foolish little woman down as gently as he possibly could.

As a matter of fact, they did not hurry over their lunch, but seemed to be enjoying themselves very much. In reality, to Jervis it was the flattest and stalest entertainment at which he had ever put in time. Still, he had to put the time in, and therefore he laughed and joked and made believe to be merry with the rest.

"And now," cried Mrs. Paget, as they rose from the table, "let you and I get our hats on, Maudie, and let James pick us out two of the smartest hansom's he can find, and we will be off to do our Tussaud's."

Now, you know, Madame Tussaud's is a place which you must be very young or very much in love to enjoy without the aid of children; I have never taken any children to Madame Tussaud's. I am saving that treat for a future day, as I am saving several other sights in London, that I may not use up my power of enjoyment too early. Jervis, on the contrary, had been to Madame Tussaud's many times. It is a safe place to go to if you don't want to meet many people in your own set. Of course, there is always a chance that they may have gone there for the same purpose; but after all, it is only a chance, and Jervis had been especially fortunate in his experiences of the great palace of wax-works. Once safely into the cab,—and it really was a very

smart one—Mrs. Paget permitted herself to be a little what we may call retrospective in manner.

"Dear old fellow!" she said, turning her beaming eyes upon him, "you don't know how delightful it is to have you back again."

"My dear little woman," said Jervis, "I think, from the pleasure of being back again, that I can understand perhaps too well."

"No," said Mrs. Paget, with a sigh, "I don't think men ever really quite understand us. Perhaps we don't quite understand ourselves. Eh, what's that?"

That was the fact that Jervis had suddenly slued round in the cab, and was flattening his nose against the little side-window in order to see somebody who was just passing.

"Who was it?" Mrs. Paget asked, with quite a change of tone.

"I think it was Drummond," said Jervis, sitting back again and straightening his ruffled plumage, otherwise his hat and tie and button-hole and himself generally.

"Drummond? Who is Drummond?"

"Oh, one of our officers. Very good fellow. He was the man I was dining with last night."

"What made you so excited at seeing him, then?"

"I was not excited, my dear child," said Jervis still more mendaciously.

As a matter of fact, he had caught sight of a mass of ruddy bronze hair and fancied that it was Katey herself. But it was not Katey, or, at all events, he was not sure about it. Still, the mere fancy had been enough to set all his pulses throbbing and to bring a blaze of light into his eyes.

"I saw nobody who looked at all like one of your officers," said Mrs. Paget, rather sharply.

But Jervis did not answer for a moment. Then he shook himself together and said, "I beg your pardon, what were you saying?"

"Oh, nothing, nothing, only that it is very good to be doing a little gallivanting in a cab once more," she answered, with a sudden change of tone.

"Yes, it is very good," said Jervis, but although he spoke feelingly, at the same time there was a difference in his tones, and the little woman at his side marked it immediately.

Well, they conscientiously did the wax-works, Horrors and all, and then they went off as they had come to the house of Mrs. Fitz-Hardinge, where they regaled themselves with an enormous tea and arrived in the door-way of the drawing-room just in time to hear the plaudits which the very select company within were bestowing upon the great singer, Madame Zi-Zi.

"Dear Madame Zi-Zi," said Mrs. Paget, grasping that lady by both hands, "what a treat it is to hear you! We rushed from another place on purpose because we knew you were going to sing about this time. Thank you so much!"

Madame Zi-Zi responded in broken English that she was "ver charmed to have pleased Madame," and each lady went on her way mutually pleased with the other. Of course, the one had not heard a note that the other had sung, but then Madame did not know that, so it made little or no difference to her.

"One must be civil to these people," she remarked a moment later to Jervis; "they expect it, you know!"

CHAPTER XXX.

A BRIGHT IDEA.

"Noble desires, unless filled up with action,
Are but a shell of gold hollow within."

ROSCOE.

PHIL JERVIS was a man who, when he made up his mind to follow a certain course, was possessed of sufficient strength of purpose to follow his resolve out to the very letter, and having written to Katey and satisfied himself that his letter was pretty certain of reaching her, he made up his mind that he would wait for a few days before he need look for an answer. Therefore, having made up his mind, he did wait, calmly and resolutely, living the ordinary life of a man spending part of his leave in town, and giving every one with whom he came in contact the impression that he was taking his newly recovered freedom quietly and as a matter of ordinary course.

But he was none the less desperately anxious to get a reply from Katey, and although several days went over, no letter from Katey reached him. He turned into his club several times during the course of the waking hours, not because he would have gone there in the ordinary run of events, but simply to see if the letter had come. But no, there was no letter, and at last his patience would hold out no longer, and he went down to Pipe Court to see if he could elicit any information out of the keen-faced young lawyer, Mr. Shuttleworth.

"Ah, good-morning! I was just going to write you," was that young gentleman's greeting when the soldier walked into his office.

"Really?" sitting down upon the chair beside the table.

"Yes. I—well, as you have come, I may as well show you Miss Vincent's letter. Here it is."

Jervis took it with a steady enough hand, but with his heart beating painfully fast. There was no address upon it, and only the date of the previous day. "Dear Mr. Shuttleworth," it said, "I shall be very much obliged if you will tell Mr. Jervis that there is no reply to his letter. Yours truly, Katherine Vincent."

For a few seconds the room seemed to be rocking up and down, but Jervis shewed his disappointment in neither face nor manner. He quietly laid the letter down on the table again and stood up. "Well,—er—Mr. Shuttleworth, I am very much obliged to you," he said, courteously, "and there is no need to take up any more of your time. I am sorry Miss Vincent should have answered me in that way, but, as she has done so, there is, of course, no more to be said about it."

He shook hands with the lawyer and passed out, going up the court and into the open street again, but this time, instead of going Strand-wards, he turned on to the embankment, and walked that way westwards that he might the better get over the first pain of his disappointment. It was no use disguising the fact to himself that the disappointment was a very bitter one, and that he felt more like fighting it out by himself than pushing through the jostling crowds in the more frequented streets. I am bound to admit that he tramped several times up and down the entire length of the embankment before he felt like going back to the world again. Yet when he did so, it was a proud and resolute Jervis, who would stoop to ask favour of no being on earth, not even of the woman he loved. He was just turning into the club, when he met his brother officer, Drummond, who was coming in the opposite direction.

"Hullo, old chap!" said Drummond. "How is the world using you?"

"Oh, pretty fair, thanks," Jervis answered. "Are you going to lunch here?"

"Yes, are you? We may as well lunch together, don't you think?"

"With all my heart."

"Are you doing anything this afternoon?"

"Nothing in particular. What are you after?"

"Well, I thought of going to call on the Atkinsons."

"The Atkinsons? Oh, of course, yes. They live in town, don't they? Let me see, where do they hang out?"

"They hang out at Queen's Gate, my friend, and their mother is a very charming woman. You had better come along with me and see them."

"I will, with pleasure," said Jervis. "I ought to call there, of course; but, really, I didn't know what their address was."

"Yes, it will only be decent for you to call there, won't it? And Miss Jill is very much interested in you," said Drummond, in a chaffing tone.

"Oh, I don't think so. Oh, no, only interested in me because of that affair, because she knew Miss Vincent a little. I don't think she took the slightest interest in me, personally."

"Well, of course, she wouldn't be likely to do that; but at the same time, as she gave evidence against you, you should call, just to show you don't bear any malice."

"Good heavens!" said Jervis. "Malice! Why, it was true, wasn't it?"

"Yes, of course, it was true. There's something in that. Then we'll go along together there?"

"Yes, I shall be delighted."

"What are you going to do to-night?"

"I am going to dine at the—well, on my word, I

don't know where I am going to dine! I am going to dine with some people, and we did not actually fix on the place we are to dine at."

"Are you going to stay in town all through your leave?"

"Oh, I don't think so. I have half promised to go over to Ireland again, only I have a sort of feeling that I shall have no luck if I do."

"Why not?"

"Well, you see, I never stayed at Listower before, and to be fetched off as soon as I got there on a charge of murder, gave me rather a revulsion against the place—a sort of feeling against it. At all events, I haven't definitely promised to go yet. Very likely I shall hang on in town. It is getting full now, and there are plenty of people one knows. Really, I think one gets a better time than one does in the country, particularly in Ireland. But I shall see."

The two officers had their lunch together and presently went off to Queen's Gate, where the butler informed them that Mrs. Prothero-Atkinson was not at home, but added quietly, "The young ladies are in, sir."

"Mother has gone to a quite too gorgeous lunch!" said Miss Jack, as she welcomed them. "It is civic and colossal, so to speak; and then she is going on to an afternoon show where we are going to meet her. James, tell Miss Jill to come down, will you?"

She turned towards Jervis as the door closed behind the servant and held out her hand to him. "I am so glad to see you," she said, kindly. "How do you feel after all your experiences?"

Jervis smiled. "Thank you, I feel pretty much the same as I did before."

"Oh, then you are not crushed by them?"

"Not the very least in the world," said Jervis. "If I did feel inclined to be crushed at times—which I didn't—I should be so jubilant at having got out

of it that I should have forgotten the dismal side of the situation by this time altogether."

"Very well, we won't talk about it," she said. "After all, there are plenty of pleasant subjects without discussing one so truly horrible as that was. Here's Jill!"

Perhaps Jervis had never looked at Jill Atkinson with so much interest in his life before as he did that afternoon. It had not occurred to him until Drummond had hinted so much, that she was in the least degree interested in him or by him. He had flirted with her in a wholesale sort of fashion during those weeks of suspense down in Blankhampton, but it had always seemed like flirtation on her part, as he had known it to be on his own, and he looked at her now rather curiously and somewhat searchingly, feeling an odd, strange jumble of pain and disappointment, satisfaction and hope, a feeling that passed over his mind like a flash of lightning, that if he had done with Katey or Katey had done with him and this girl had come to care for him, he would not ruin a second life; that although Katey was his love, if Katey would not look at him or meet him, if she had absolutely cut herself off from all communication with him, it would be best for him to marry this girl whether he cared particularly for her or not. Perhaps I have expressed it rather clumsily, because, mind you, he did not put these thoughts into actual words as I have done. It was a feeling which I have tried to interpret, but it was only the sensation of a moment.

But Jill met him with both hands outstretched, a smile on her lips, and a gay light in her eyes, but there was not the slightest sign of her being impressed or flurried by his presence. Her colour had not risen and her hands were steady and cool.

"I am so delighted to see you!" she said, in gay, glad tones. "Poor dear creature, you! I have pic-

tured you in all sorts of ways! I pictured you with your nerves broken down after that dreadful day, and a complete wreck! Come and sit down on this sofa. My mother is not at home, you know. She has gone to a big lunch in the city—a civic thing, you know, but she will be so sorry. She has been longing to see you, because, you know, my mother is one of those novelists who dish up a murder well, and she was really quite excited over your case. She has been longing to make you the hero of a novel for some time. Yes, sit here in this cosy corner; it is lovely, isn't it? Now tell me, have you seen Katey?"

"No," said Jervis, "I have not."

"But you mean to do so?" looking straight at him.

"Well, I did mean to do so, but Katey won't see me."

"Katey is a little idiot!" said Jill promptly. "She is a little idiot! She ought to be slapped!"

"Well," said Jervis, with a smile curling his lips, "I am afraid it wouldn't quite become me to tell her so, would it?"

"No, perhaps not; but tell me, have you tried to see her?"

"Yes, I have made every effort. I have taken every course that I reasonably could take."

"Does she know it?"

"Oh, yes."

"Well, just tell me all about it. Why do you sit there mum chance, not saying a word, not helping me out? It is like a cross-examination in chief. Tell me what you did to find her."

"Well, I put it into the hands of Searchem, the detective people, and they very soon found out—not her address, but they got the address she had left with the police people at Blankhampton."

"Yes, well?"

"And it proved to be a firm of lawyers, who would

give her address if she was required for the investigation of the other girl's death."

"Oh, poor thing! To think I went and decked her grave with flowers and wept over her! Wasn't it dreadful? A poor thing I never saw! Of course, I don't say I wouldn't have decked her grave with flowers and wept over her, but not quite in the same way, don't you know. I really feel as if I had been cheated about it, as you must do. And then, you know, I had a most dreadful scene with that unfortunate young man who was so much in love with Katey."

"Sylvester?" said Jervis, looking at the tips of his fingers.

"Yes, John Sylvester. I was coming out of the churchyard—in fact, I had been to take a few flowers to lay on the grave—I was coming out and I met him. I hadn't seen him, except on the day of the funeral, when I don't think he recognized me, since I saw him at Danford last summer. And, really, he nearly frightened me to death. He abused me shockingly"

"What?" said Jervis, looking no longer at his fingers, but straight at her. "Abused you?"

"Oh, shockingly! Accused me of all sorts of dreadful things because the flowers I put on her grave were stephanotis, and, of course, they were Katey's favourite flowers, because—well, because you had given her some, you see."

"I know she was fond of stephanotis," said Jervis.

"Yes; well, he threatened to murder me or something very near it, and finally he tore them all off the grave and trampled them under foot. And I ran away! I admit it. I had no fancy to be murdered in Ingleby churchyard by Katey Vincent's cousin, and so I made a clean bolt of it, and I need not tell you I never went there alone again."

"Oh, he wouldn't have touched you," said Jervis.

"He is an awful person altogether, but he is an arrant coward. He tried a little blustering on with me, when I went up to try and catch Katey when I got clear of the court."

"Oh, he did? And what did you do?"

"Well, I knocked him down. I could do nothing else. When a man comes up in a public place and begins blackguarding you, you have no alternative."

"I am glad you knocked him down," said Jill, "because, you know, I think it would do him good. I don't think he would be so bad if he were taken in hand. Now Katey could not do him any good, because she only irritated him by refusing him; but if he had been taken in hand by a really accomplished flirt a few years older than himself, then, you know, I think he might be licked into quite a presentable shape."

"Never!" said Jervis. "Never!"

"Well, perhaps not," Jill admitted. "However, you have not finished telling me about Katey. You went to Searchem & Co.—they are very good people—and they discovered the lawyer—well?"

"Well, I wrote to Katey, and I asked the lawyer to deliver the letter to her."

"And you proposed to her in it, of course?"

"Oh, no, I didn't," said Jervis.

"You wrote to Katey, and you never asked her to marry you!"

"Never heard of asking a lady to marry you by letter. I asked her to see me."

"You never asked her to marry you?"

"No, I didn't."

"And what did Katey say?"

"Oh, Katey never answered."

"And how do you know she got it? Perhaps the lawyer man didn't give it her. Perhaps he kept it. Was he young?"

"Yes, he was young."

"Well, perhaps he has an eye on Katey himself, and never delivered your letter."

"Well, that is possible," said Jervis; "but it isn't at all probable, because I went down to his office after waiting a few days, and I found that he had just received a letter from Katey asking him to tell me that there was no answer to my letter. So, of course, there I was at a deadlock."

"But you are not going to sit down and do nothing more?"

"I don't see what more there is I can do."

"But you haven't asked her to marry you."

"I asked her to see me," said Jervis, obstinately. "What else can she suppose I wanted to see her for? I wrote her a very nice letter, and I ate no end of humble-pie. I am not going to put myself down like a door-mat for people to wipe their feet on me. I don't believe in that kind of thing. After all, you know, it is I who have suffered through all this business."

"Yes, that is so. But you really are fond of Katey, are you not?"

"Yes, I am very fond of her."

"You want to marry her?"

"Yes, I do."

"It seems to me so silly! If I wanted to marry anybody, and I knew that somebody liked me and was really in love with me, as Katey was, and must be still with you, I should not sit down and let my miserable paltry pride stand in my way. I am sure I shouldn't."

"Oh, well, you haven't got there yet, Miss Jill, and you haven't been in prison. I have, and my experience is different from yours. At all events, Katey won't see me, and there is no more to be said."

"Well, I don't agree with you. By the bye, was the lawyer—was he anybody one knows?"

"He was nobody I knew," Jervis replied. "His

name is Shuttleworth, and his firm is Reed & Shuttleworth."

"Reed & Shuttleworth? I think I know the name," said Jill, who did not know it a bit, by the bye. "Let me see, they are in—now where are they?"

"They are in Pipe Court," said Jervis, quite innocently.

"That's in the Temple somewhere, isn't it?"

"Yes, out of Fleet Street, you know."

"I know, yes; Reed & Shuttleworth. I think I know something about them," said Jill, most mendaciously. She had never heard the name in her life before—not as connected with the law, that is. "But you are not angry with Katey, are you?"

"Yes, I did feel rather angry with her this morning," said Jervis, "because I thought—really I don't want to speak against her, I am awfully in love with her—but I felt that she had made me suffer enough, and that she might try to look at the matter from my side a little. I was rather angry with her this morning."

"In fact, you were in a towering rage," said Jill, who wanted to get at the rights of things.

"I never get into towering rages," said Jervis. "I wasn't in a towering rage when that ill-conditioned young lout, Sylvester, started abusing me. Sometimes, I wish I could get into a rage. That sort of thing lets the steam off, you know."

"Yes, I suppose it does—in fact, I know it does, because I've got that kind of temper myself. Poor Katey! I daresay she is very miserable."

On that point, however, Jervis offered no opinion, in his heart of hearts feeling still very sore at his honest and straightforward letter having been utterly ignored. He felt that if she was feeling very miserable, such a condition of mind was only her just deserts.

"And, of course, poor girl, having thrown herself upon your pity once, and received a letter from you

in which you only asked her to see you, she would naturally not want to throw herself upon your pity a second time."

"I daresay not," said Jervis; "still, she might have had the grace to write to me herself, and not sent me an answer through a lawyer man."

"Poor Katey!" said Jill, pityingly.

By this time Jervis was quite cured of any idea that Jill was in any sense pining for love of him. She was frank and friendly and gay to a degree, but she was not love-lorn. If there was any tenderness for him lurking in the depths of her heart, she was the kind of girl who would hide it with a smile upon her lips.

"Depend upon it," she said, after a moment's silence, "that it will all come right in the end. I have great faith in time."

And all the while she kept saying to herself, "Reed & Shuttleworth, Pipe Court! Reed & Shuttleworth, Pipe Court!"

CHAPTER XXXI.

JILL'S LITTLE PILGRIMAGE.

"Each man can learn something from his neighbour."
KINGSLEY.

As soon as Jervis and Drummond had betaken themselves away from Mrs. Prothero-Atkinson's house in Queen's Gate, the two sisters went to dress for the party at which they were to meet their mother.

"Why didn't you ask them to go with us?" said Jill to Miss Jack.

"Oh, I never thought of it," Miss Jack answered.

"Well, but why didn't you?" Jill insisted.

"Did you want Mr. Jervis to go?" asked Miss Jack, significantly.

"I? Oh, dear no; but I think they would have liked it, and I am sure the other one would."

Miss Jack, however, only laughed. "Oh, my dear, you are mistaken about that."

"I don't think so," said Jill. "I think your friend, Mr. Drummond, is very gone."

"Then," said Miss Jack, with an airy laugh, "let him look and long for it. He will value it the more if he gets it."

Now of the two young men, Drummond was furiously angry that neither of the girls had suggested taking them on to this party. Jervis would have gone if he had been asked, because he would have gone anywhere at that juncture in order to kill time, but personally he was quite indifferent to the method of killing it.

"You know," said Jill Atkinson to her sister, "that young man is very much in love with Katey Vincent, still."

"Yes, of course he is. One wonders how he can be. Nasty little thing! I never liked her, you know."

"No, dear, I know you didn't; but she was a good sort. She had a bad time. It must be very bad to live out of your own house—on people, so to speak, and to have the love-making of a ridiculous elephant like John Sylvester must be more dreadful. I must say, I feel very much for Katey."

"Well, it is more than I do," responded Miss Jack. "By the bye, we are pretty late as it is. Are you going to begin writing letters?"

"Not at all. I am only going to put down an address."

"Katey's address?"

"Oh, dear, no," said Jill; "he doesn't know where

Katey is, poor thing. Hasn't the least idea, and can't find out. Yes, it is rather late; it is twenty minutes to five. Oh, never mind; we have had a good time, and mother will not have got there very early."

Jill had begun to dress hurriedly while she was still speaking, and indeed was ready at the same time as her sister, so that Miss Jack asked no further questions about the address, which she had just set down on a bit of paper and stowed in the innermost recesses of her desk. But the following morning when they had breakfasted, and Mrs. Atkinson had disappeared into her study, from which she would certainly not emerge until the lunch-bell rung at half-past one, Jill asked her sister in a casual kind of way what she was going to do.

"Well, I have got my singing lesson at half-past eleven," she replied, "and I promised faithfully I would go in and get that ball-gown tried on."

"Oh, did you? Well, I don't think I shall go with you to-day. I wish you would tell Jane White to carry the trimming round the point of my bodice as she suggested doing it. I think it would look much better."

"Where are you going?" Miss Jack asked.

"Oh, out and about a little. I will be back for lunch."

It was a point of honour with these sisters that they never interfered with each other's movements or pried into each other's doings. This had arisen a good deal from the fact that their mother lived at once a sympathetic and an isolated life from her daughters—isolation in point of interest and work, sympathetic in point of pleasure and all matters relating to society. From the time when they had first left school, she had always expected them to take care of themselves during the morning hours, as under no circumstances did she—short of a big civic lunch or something of that kind—break through her

daily habit of sitting down immediately after breakfast to her work and continuing thereat until the bell rang for lunch.

So presently Jill dressed herself with care and sallied forth into the clear March morning. She walked leisurely down Queen's Gate and turned up the Brompton Road, presently getting into a passing omnibus and going unconcernedly city-wards. She sat in her corner until she reached the Law Courts, where she got down and walked quietly along, still going city-wards. She had really not been very many times in Fleet Street, and, as a matter of fact, she had never been there alone before. Of course, so pretty and smart-looking a girl attracted a good deal of attention, but Jill kept steadily on her way until she met with a benevolent policeman, whom she accosted, enquiring if he could direct her to Pipe Court. He gave her the necessary directions for finding it, and seeing her look a little hesitatingly at the busy roadway, volunteered to take her across. Jill presented him with a shilling, which he accepted after some little demur, and then she went bravely along until she turned in at the dingy archway which led into the court which she was seeking.

She went up the same stairs, knocked at the same door, was received by the same office boy as had previously been interviewed by Jervis and Mr. Searchem. The boy went through the same procedure as before. Wrote her name down upon a slip of paper and carried it and the information that neither of the gentlemen would know her personally into the inner room.

"Mr. Reed will see you in three minutes, Miss," said the boy. Whereat Jill said, "Thank you," very politely, and began to study a map of London which had hung in the lawyers' office for many and many a year. Then a little bell rang within, and the boy invited her to "Walk this way." She did walk

that way, and was immediately ushered into the presence of a tall man about forty years old, with iron grey hair.

"I have really come to ask a favour of you," said Jill.

Now the gentleman was an austere person, who did not approve of beautiful young ladies, smartly attired, invading the sacred recesses of lawyers' offices. "Indeed!" he said, in a frozen voice, and immediately got up and stood with his back to the fire, instinctively buttoning his frock coat.

The action was not lost upon Jill, and she laughed outright. "I am not going to beg anything of you," she said, "at least, not of that kind. I really came to ask you if you would be so very good as to give me the address of a young lady who has left it with you."

"Oh, and what is her name, may I ask?"

"Her name is Vincent."

"I think," said Mr. Reed, more affably, and perhaps a little ashamed of having so ostentatiously buttoned up his coat, "that that is a matter in which my partner is interested. Excuse me a moment, I will ask him."

His partner's office opened out of his, but, of course, he did not do anything so unprofessional as open the door and ask him if he was disengaged. On the contrary, he rang the bell, and the boy appeared on the scene.

"Find out if Mr. Shuttleworth is engaged."

"Yes, sir," said the boy.

Mr. Reed, perhaps still a little more ashamed, stirred the fire, and remarked that the day was cold.

"But very bright," said Jill, sweetly.

To which he agreed. Then the boy returned with the information that Mr. Shuttleworth was disengaged.

"Then show this lady into his room. Sorry to have to move you about so often," he said, smiling quite genially. "Good-morning!"

"Good-morning!" said Jill.

Mr. Shuttleworth she perceived immediately was of a different calibre altogether. He made no pretence of not admiring her, and asked her in quite a refreshingly pleasant tone what he could have the pleasure of doing for her.

"I want the address of Miss Katey Vincent," she said, looking at him sweetly.

"Ah, do you?" he returned. "Well, I am very sorry, but I cannot give it to you."

"But why can't you give it to me? I am a great friend of hers."

"Yes, I know who you are. You are the young lady who gave evidence in Mr. Jervis's trial."

"I am," said Jill; "and I want to see Katey very much."

"Well, I am very sorry, but I have solemnly promised not to give her address to anybody."

"Now, that is very tiresome! I wonder why she made you make such a ridiculous promise as that? Do you know her personally?"

"Yes."

"Do you often see her?"

"Oh, occasionally. Not every day, if that is what you mean."

"Well, now, Mr.—yes, Shuttleworth, now look here, Mr. Shuttleworth, you know Katey is a very nice girl."

"She is a very nice girl," said Mr. Shuttleworth, smiling a little.

"And you know that young man is very much in love with her?"

"Yes, I believe he is."

"And you know, really she was very foolish. She has behaved very badly to him."

"Well, I daresay she has ; in fact, I am afraid I do sympathise with Jervis a good deal more than you think, perhaps. At the same time, of course, my business is that I have promised Miss Vincent not to betray her address to anybody, and I can't break my word."

"No, I suppose you can't," said Jill, reflectively. "But can't you tell her that I came to see you, and that I want very much indeed to see her? Can't you tell her that?"

"Yes, certainly I can tell her that. But why don't you write and tell her so?"

"But I don't know where to write," said Jill.

"Oh, I do."

"Oh, and would you send a letter for me?"

"Of course I would."

"Oh, well, if you would do that! You wouldn't let me write it here, would you?"

The lawyer laughed outright. "Of course, I would."

"Oh, well, that would be quite lovely of you!" said Jill, and forthwith began to draw off her gloves that she might write the better. Her letter was short and very much to the point.

"My dear Katey," she said, "I have unearthed your lawyer and persuaded him to let me write to you through him. I want to see you. You know perfectly well that your name and address will be absolutely safe with me. For old friendship's sake do let me come and see you without delay. I have a great deal to tell you. Or will you come and see me? I can't write more now as I am taking up Mr. Shuttleworth's time. Your affectionate friend, Jill Atkinson." She added her own address and closed the letter.

"There now," her thoughts ran, "if she comes to see me, I can hustle a telegram off to fetch him, and then he must do the rest himself." Aloud, however,

she only expressed her most grateful thanks to Mr. Shuttleworth for his kindness in conveying her letter to Katey, and she added to her leave-taking, "If you can put in a word which will make her see me, I hope you will do it."

"Surely," said the lawyer, in reply, "Miss Vincent will not require any persuasions of mine——"

At which Jill laughed merrily as she went down the narrow stairs.

On emerging from the court, Jill turned her face westwards, and walked steadily on until she was passed by a Brompton omnibus, and so her little pilgrimage to the city ended without anybody who knew her being the wiser for it. She reached home some time before her sister, and was asked no questions as to how she had spent the morning. She watched the post very carefully during the few days immediately following upon her pilgrimage, but there was no letter from Katey. At last, she received a communication from Mr. Shuttleworth saying that he was exceedingly sorry to have to tell her that he had seen Miss Vincent, and she was sorry she could not go to see her or disclose her address. "She said," he added, "that I was to give you her love, and say that she thinks often of you, and would really like to see you very much, indeed, but she has taken up a totally different life to the life that she was living when you first saw her, and therefore she feels that it is better on all accounts to keep herself entirely apart from her own friends."

"I should like to shake her!" said Jill, crumpling the letter up and tossing it into the fire. "Obstinate little thing! And to think of a man like Jervis being in love with it! Stupid little thing! She ought to be made to understand what is good for her. At present she is just like a silly child in the sulks."

CHAPTER XXXII.

FOUND.

“Circumstances are the ruler of the weak.”

LOVER.

MEANTIME Jervis, having given up the idea of attempting to bring about an interview with Katey, had swallowed the worst of his disappointment, and was getting what enjoyment he could out of the rest of his leave. It had been an immense relief to him to find that Jill Atkinson evidently cared nothing whatever about him, and he went a good deal to Mrs. Atkinson's house, partly because she herself made a great deal of him, and partly because he liked Jill so much. She was so downright, so outspoken, so refreshing in every way, that her society was always a quite unmixed pleasure to him. And although his heart was very sore at Katey's obduracy, although he was very much in love with her indeed, and would have done anything that a man could do to bring about a complete reconciliation, to atone for the seeming harshness of the past, to make her the one object and lodestar of his life from that time forward, yet he could not help feeling that Katey was treating him abominably; he could not help feeling that he had gone through so much for her sake and that she had brought the suffering upon him, suffering which might have ended with the forfeit of his life. He was unhappy and disappointed, but since she was as she was, since she had this evident feeling of anger against him, he made no further attempt to seek her out. He was the same Jervis who had rated her

soundly for her imprudence in taking him literally at his word when he had meant her to take him in a totally different sense; he was the same Jervis who had resolutely declined to keep silent lest he might admit something which damaged him; he was the same Jervis who had stood without flinching to receive the sentence of death. If Katey had been willing, as he was, to forget the pain of the past, well and good; but if Katey wished to forget that such a man as Jervis existed, he would make no effort to remind her thereof. He had not cringed when his life was hanging in the balance, and he did not feel any more inclined to cringe now for the love which he was most anxious to win. He felt that although giving was a very beautiful thing, giving is a very poor business unless there is a little take in the matter, also. He had been very angry with Katey that morning when he had seen her reply to Shuttleworth, and, as I said, had spent an hour or two on the comparatively deserted embankment; but because Katey remained obdurate, he did not continue to roam about in desolate places, nor to wear his heart upon his sleeve for the daws of the world to peck at. Not at all! he lived quite his ordinary life, went several times a week to the Atkinsons', looked in almost every day to see Mrs. Paget, went freely to his club and mixed with his brother men, and took such amusement out of life as he could conveniently get.

And all the time, Jill Atkinson was wondering—wondering, if he really did care so much for Katey after all, wondering if she need trouble her head any more about his affairs or himself. He never mentioned her, and she did not like to mention her either. He was always ready for every bit of amusement that they proposed to him, and when, finally, his great friend, Drummond, proposed to Miss Jack and was accepted, he almost wrung his friend's hand off, and

expressed his opinion that he "was a lucky dog!" The day after this, Jill deliberately put a beautiful photograph of Katey—the same as the one which stood on his own smoking table—in a conspicuous part of the drawing-room, and the next time that he came she noticed, while she was talking to some other people who happened to be there, that he picked it up and looked at it long and earnestly. Then he put it down and went to the window, where he stood looking out over the wide and handsome street.

"He does care," said Jill to herself, "and how well he hides it! And what a little fool Katey must be!"

Then she set herself again to once more try and bring her friend to reason, for she wrote her a long, long letter, calculated, as she herself remarked to the sanctity of her blotting-book, to move the heart of a stone.

"My dear Katey," she began, "I am going to make yet another effort to induce you to listen to reason and not hide yourself any longer in the aggravating and ridiculous way that you are doing. Now, my dear girl, why are you hiding yourself from all your friends? I can quite understand your wishing to keep your life and your habits from the Sylvesters—especially from that detestable John, who is one of the most terrible persons with whom I have ever been brought into contact—but with Mr. Jervis and with ourselves, it is totally different. In the first place, with us, you know perfectly well that your secret will be absolutely safe, if you wish it even from Mr. Jervis. With him, you must know—need I say by experience?—that both your secret and yourself would be as safe as a church. My dear Katey, you are treating him very badly. He is still in town, and I see him almost every day, and it really hurts me to know that you are deliberately and wantonly throwing away the best chance of happiness

that you, or any other woman, ever had in this world. My dear girl, he is awfully in love with you! He does not speak of you now, nor whine or look glum or anything of that kind, but all the same I know perfectly well that he is just breaking his heart about you. You know what a man he is! You have seen for yourself how wonderful his courage is. Why don't you own up that you were absolutely wrong, as you ought to do, as you would do if you were true to yourself and your best instincts? Surely, you are not going to let a little foolish pride stand in the way of your life-long happiness. Only yesterday I had put a photograph of you on the table in the drawing-room, purposely to see if he would notice it. Notice it! Ah, he picked it up and looked at it for ever so long, and then he went to the window and stood looking out till my heart ached for him! If you would only see me, then I could say so much more than I can possibly do in a letter. Letters are so unsatisfactory. Do let me come and see you, Katey. Or do meet me somewhere. I won't even ask you what your name is—I mean the name you are going by now—only do break this dreadful icy wall of silence which you have built up around yourself! At all events, let me penetrate into your heart. I know that if you do, you will bless me all the rest of your life. Dear Katey, don't keep me waiting three or four days for an answer to this. Do reply immediately. Your friend, Jill."

Well, the day wore on, and in a vague, feverish sort of unrest, Jill kept a watch upon the letters and upon the various pulls at the front-door bell. Whether she expected that Katey would run to the nearest telegraph office and wire to her that she might come and see her, I can't quite say, but that day went by, and naturally no reply reached her. It was natural, because, as a matter of fact, Katey had not then received the letter. On the morning of the third

day, however, Jill received a letter in the well-known handwriting. It was undated, and bore no address, and the post-mark was that of Charing Cross.

"Dear Jill," Katey said, "I fully appreciate your real kindness in writing to me. Believe me, the past is past and is best so. I have suffered very much for years. Mr. Jervis and I are better apart. If we met, we should only quarrel and wrangle, and one blame the other for what neither the one nor the other ever meant that unfortunate night. I am earning my bread honestly, and I think I shall get on by-and-by. For the present, I can only steel my heart against seeing you, and sign myself, Your very grateful friend, Katey."

"What is the good of troubling about such a little fool?" cried Jill indignantly.

"What did you say, Miss Jill?" asked a housemaid, who had just entered with some hot water.

"I didn't say anything," said Jill; "thank you—at least, I did, but I was saying it to myself. Nothing to do with you, Potter, thank you."

But when Potter had gone, Jill laid back upon her pillow again with angry and indignant eyes. "How can he care for her? But there, I suppose he can't help it, poor fellow. Nasty little thing! I—I—don't know what I'd like to do to her! I won't trouble any more about it one way or the other. No, I declare I won't! Poor dear old fellow! He must just manage his love affairs as he can. I won't trouble any more!"

She did not, however, burn that letter. On the contrary, she locked it up in the drawer of the case in which she kept her trinkets, but her demeanour was a good deal ruffled during the rest of the day, indeed, until late in the afternoon when Jervis came in, and his unconcerned manner somewhat smoothed down Miss Jill's ruffled plumage.

"By the bye," he remarked presently, "what evening will you go to the 'Doctor' with me?"

"Well, Mother has seen the 'Doctor,'" Miss Jack replied, "so that we might go one night when Mother is dining out. She hates to see a play twice."

"And Mother is dining out on Thursday night," said Jill, "and we are doing nothing. Will Thursday night suit you?"

"Thursday will suit me perfectly," said Jervis. "I suppose you will go, old fellow," he said, turning to Drummond.

"I should be enchanted."

"Then we'll say Thursday."

The two men dined quietly with the two girls in Queen's Gate, and the four went off to the theatre together. They had got seats in the stalls, and happened to see a good many people whom the Atkinsons knew, and they received during the course of the evening an invitation from a lady and gentleman to accompany them to another theatre the following evening.

"We will call for you in plenty of time," said Mrs. Desmond, as she took leave of them; "and we have a big stage box, so that we shall see beautifully. Good-night, dears."

"Good-night," said the two girls. "Awfully good of you to think of us."

So the following evening found them in one of the stage boxes of the Cornhill Theatre, and, as a very popular piece was then running, the house was full to repletion.

"It is quite like a first night!" said Jill, who loved gaiety and going about among her fellow creatures. "It is a real treat to see a house crammed like this. Oh, Jack, do look at that girl down there with the row of sausages on her head! Isn't it funny? Do look at the girl with a currant bun, at the back of the long-nosed man with the bullet head making love to the little girl with salt-cellars just in front of them. Oh, aren't they funny! Oh, Mrs. Desmond,

you don't know how we do love watching people at a theatre! It is far better than the Park."

"Yes, because the Park is like a kaleidoscope,—it is always changing; but in a theatre you can get a good stare at any person you wish to."

"Why, there's Mrs. Jackson! Look there—in the second row!" cried Miss Jack.

"Yes, and she's got the comb on."

"What is the comb?" asked Mrs. Desmond.

"Oh, it is a diamond comb. She always wears it. She wears it everywhere. It is what she calls dressing for the evening. She never makes any difference in her dress. If you go to see her in the afternoon, she has a black silk dress and white shawl on, just the same, but if she puts her diamond comb on, she is dressed for the evening."

At that moment the curtain went up, and all attention was concentrated upon the stage. The play then running was an enormously popular one—the story of a beautiful woman with a past known only to one or two persons with whom she was unlikely to be brought into contact after her marriage with the hero. You see her in the first flush and pride of adored young wifehood, and you know perfectly well that something is coming to mar the perfect harmony in which her life now runs, that in the wonderful melody of love a string will snap, a false tone as surely come, as that you are sitting with your heart in your mouth watching the scene before you. The first scene ended with the meeting between the woman and her past, and the curtain went down amid thunders of applause, while the tears stood in Jill Atkinson's eyes.

"I know perfectly well," she said, dashing her tears away with a little square of filmy cambric, "that I am going to sob right through this piece, until I shall be a disfigured object at the end, ashamed to go out and get into the carriage. I wonder why

they write such plays! And yet, I don't know, we all like to see them. Let us diversify ourselves by seeing how the lady with the sausages is getting on."

"She is going to have an ice," said Miss Jack.

"Ah, then she has come from the country. She has had her hair dressed by a hair-dresser, that is very evident," said Jill. "Lend me the glass a minute, Jack. Oh, yes, it has been done by a hair-dresser," she went on, "and it's very uncomfortable. There's a hair just at the back which is pulling. She is trying to get it out. Oh, look, look, look! Don't touch that hair! There, she's done it."

"She was bound to do it," said Miss Jack, laughing immoderately.

"There's Mrs. Jackson looking right across at us, Jack. She knows us. How do you do?" waving her hand and taking the glasses away from her eyes for a minute. "Mrs. Desmond, there's somebody looking so hard up here. It is some one you know."

"Yes, yes, it is Mrs. Winstanley and her daughter. I suppose that's her daughter's young man—oh, and Colonel Broughton with them. Very astonishing that affair is, isn't it?"

"I suppose he is very devoted."

"Oh, my dear, devoted isn't the word. Old Mr. Winstanley seems to have no idea of it at all."

"Oh, I don't suppose he'd mind," said Jill. "You see, he is pretty old, and he hates going to theatres and getting into draughts and taking cold. Poor old gentleman! I think Mrs. Winstanley is very wise to have a Colonel Broughton."

"Oh, yes, my dear, nobody disputes the wisdom on her part. What one wonders at a little is Colonel Broughton, don't you think?"

"Very much," said Jill, "very much, indeed."

Jill carefully swept the less expensive parts of the house with her glasses while her hostess was talk-

ing, for she had always a feeling that some day she would see Katey again. She scarcely expected to see her in the pit, nor yet in the gallery, but she examined both of them, and likewise the two circles, but there was no Katey that evening. Then the curtain went up again, and the story of the woman with a past slowly worked itself out before their expectant eyes. She was a beautiful creature, the woman with a past, tall and stately, and to a certain extent snake-like in movement, a woman with a wonderful profile, the admiration of all London, and a golden voice, which thrilled the great audience through and through. Such stories are very sad, sad enough when the lovely heroine is entirely innocent and wrongly charged, more sad when the past has been really a past and not a mere shadow. Of all that vast audience I doubt if there was one heart which was not suffering with the woman suffering upon the stage; I doubt if there was one soul who was not thrilled by the sad and beautiful cadences of the golden voice. And Jill wept and wept with the rest, until, as she had said, she was an unrepresentable object, when suddenly her attention was taken from the vivid personality of the woman with a past and rivetted upon a minor figure of the crowd then occupying the stage. In a minute she had forgotten the lovely person, the golden voice, and the suffering heart of the woman before her. She stood upright, dried her eyes, and adjusted the opera-glasses that she might see the better. Surely she knew that face, recognised that figure, had heard before the tones of the voice! Surely that little waiting-maid was no new personality to her! Could it be? Was it? She touched her sister upon the arm. Miss Jack had noticed nothing, and was following with keenest interest the action of the play."

"Jack," whispered Jill.

"What is it?" she asked.

"Do look at that waiting-maid, Suzanne. Who is it?"

"I don't know," said Miss Jack, crossly. "Don't bother!"

But Jill touched her again. "Jack," she said, "you *must* look. Here, take the glasses. Tell me if you have ever seen that girl before."

Miss Jack took the glasses and adjusted them to her own sight. "I don't know," she said; "I am not sure, but she is as like as two peas to Katey Vincent."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

AN ALTERNATIVE.

"All thought and feeling and desire, I said,
Love, laughter and the exultant joy of song
Have ebbed from me for ever!"

LONGFELLOW.

FOR Jill, the play had no further interest. She watched the little figure in the smart French cap and apron whenever it was on the stage, and as soon as the act was over she borrowed a pencil from Mr. Desmond, who also supplied her with half a sheet of note-paper torn off a letter which he happened to have in his pocket. On this she wrote a brief note. "Dear Katey," she said, "I know that you are Suzanne. You can't hide yourself from me any longer. Is it possible that I can come round and see you in your dressing-room? Your friend, Jill."

She twisted the paper into a three-cornered note, and Mr. Desmond promised to see it taken round behind the scenes. Naturally, she had addressed it to "Miss Vincent," and when presently the attendant

came back saying that there was no lady in the company of that name, she bethought her to look on the programme and see under what name the part of Suzanne was played. "Miss Vere Hope," she read, so deeply scored out the name of Vincent and wrote below it "To Miss Vere Hope," and gave it back to the attendant, who promised to see it delivered immediately. In about a quarter of an hour he returned, bringing a similar missive to the one with which she had first entrusted him. "My dear Jill," she said, "since you have found me out, it is no use my denying myself any longer to you. We are not allowed to have visitors behind, but if you will come and see me to-morrow afternoon about half-past three or four o'clock at No. 10 Cronstadt Road, Hammer-smith, I will be there. I trust to your honour not to give my address to any living soul."

"One moment," said Jill to the attendant. "Lend me the pencil again, Mr. Desmond, will you?"

She tore Katey's note in two, retaining the half that was written upon, and upon the other she wrote, "I will be there. You may trust to my discretion Your friend, Jill."

"Give that to Miss Hope, please," she said.

"Is it Katey?" asked Miss Jack.

"Yes, and I am going to see her to-morrow, but she asks me not to speak of it to a living soul, so, of course, I won't until I have seen her."

The following afternoon Jill got into a cab and drove down to Cronstadt Road. It was a small, quite suburban-looking road, with a row of straggling and as yet leafless trees decorating it on each side of the pavement. The houses were small and had bow windows and porches, they also mostly had art muslin window blinds, as you see in suburban roads. Some of them were tied up with bows of ribbon, others had plush straps worked with sunflowers, some had plain white muslin curtains that made the

windows look like blind eyes, and No. 10 Jill found to be decked in yellow muslin—the twopence ha'penny a yard kind, made with as many frills as a *débutante's* petticoats.

Jill got down and paid the cabman.

"Shall you be going back again, lady?" he asked, for cabmen appreciate single ladies who pay them something over their legitimate fare.

"Yes, I shall be going back by-and-by, but I can't say how long I shall be."

"Well, Miss, it is a long way down from Queen's Gate, and my 'orse will be glad of a rest, so if you have no objections, I will wait for you, or I will come back in an hour, which you like."

"Well, come back in an hour," said Jill, "that will do very well for me."

"Miss Hope at home?" she asked of the dingy little maid who opened the door about two inches and peered at her curiously from that coign of vantage. The little maid set the door open sufficiently wide for the young lady to pass "this w'y," then opened the door of the front sitting-room and flung it open with a jerk—"Miss 'Ope's in there," she remarked, quite affably. Whereat Jill walked in and the little maid shut the door behind her.

Katey was standing upon the hearth rug as if half hesitating whether to rush to meet her friend or not. Jill was very matter of fact. She caught the girl by both hands and kissed her first on one cheek then on the other in the mode which is most prevalent just now in London.

"My dear Katey," she said, "I could scarcely believe my eyes when I saw you last night in your cap and apron. Now I want to know what you mean by keeping us all at bay in this shocking manner. I consider you have behaved disgracefully. Yes, I do, really, simply disgracefully, and my opinion is that you ought to have something very dreadful done

to you by way of punishing you for it. Why do you do it?"

"Well," said Katey, keeping a fast hold of Jill's hands, "I thought it was better. You know some people have a horror of the stage—most people have, and I felt that I had made a new start, and that the less I had to do with any of those I had known in the old days the better."

"Oh, stuff and nonsense!" said Jill disdainfully. "Well, my dear, I must congratulate you on having made such a plucky stand at earning your own living. Of course, you know in our set one thinks fifty times as much of a girl who does that as of such useless idle beings as Jack and myself, who simply live on what our Mother earns. But I cannot congratulate you on your looks, my dear. You are looking very bad. I don't think theatre work agrees with you, young woman."

"Oh, yes," said Katey, "I am just a little excited at seeing you, and a bit knocked up because I did not have a very good night."

"You don't deserve to have a good night! You don't deserve to have anything but the most extreme ill-luck and everything disagreeable and horrid. But why need we stand here? Are you not going to ask me to sit down?"

"No," said Katey, "I am not going to ask you to sit down. You can sit down if you want to. Don't be silly, Jill."

"I will not be silly," said Jill, drawing her down on the narrow little sofa. "Well, so you are here living in diggings by yourself. Are you very dull?"

"Oh, very dull, sometimes," cried Katey, her lips quivering a little.

"I should think so! Of course, it must be very nice going on the stage and all that, but it must be pretty dull living down here, Katey; and when you think

of the kind of life you could have, you know, it seems so silly, so Quixotic."

"What kind of life? Living with my people in the same house as John Sylvester? My dear Jill, I assure you that I would rather die at once than go back again! If it was for me this moment to make a choice between going back to Danford and dying, I would say dying without hesitation."

"Yes, I can quite believe that. Anybody could believe that who had once seen the uncle and aunt in all the pride of their prim respectability, to say nothing of cousin John, in all the horrors of his adolescent caprices. I saw your cousin John several times while the trial was going on. He is a dreadful person, Katey! I don't wonder that you would rather die than go back within a mile of him, but, then, nobody wants you to go back. They don't want you to go back—I suppose he does, or thinks he does, but, of course, his wishes go for very little—but, of course, your own people don't care twopence farthing what becomes of you. Of course, everybody thinks they showed up very badly at the trial in a certain sense, but you know, dear, that is not the question."

"There is no other question," said Katey, in a dull, chilled voice.

"Oh, yes, there is," said Jill, coolly; "there is the question of poor Jervis. You know you are behaving very badly to him, Katey."

"I don't think so," said Katey.

"Well, but you are."

"I think I am the best judge of that, Jill. I don't want to offend you, dear. I know it is very kind of you to wish to do everything to make me happier, but it is no use discussing that subject, because I have quite made up my mind that he and I are better apart."

"I don't believe," said Jill, looking at her as she

would look at some curious specimen of humanity, "that you ever cared twopence ha'penny about Philip Jervis!"

"There is not much doubt that Philip Jervis never cared very much about me."

"Oh, Katey, how can you say so!" Jill burst out.

"Ah, well, you and I have seen him under totally different circumstances. You have seen him in society, as I used to see him; you have never seen him as I did—quite alone, with no world looking on, literally heart to heart. If you had ever done that, my dear, you would think differently of him now. When you are young and trustful and believing, and you give a man your whole heart's affection, you accept his word as his bond and you cast your whole life at his mercy, and you feel all manner of beautiful and chivalrous ideas. But when you have had your love and your trust rejected—rejected plainly, and in the most unmistakable terms—when you have had your very heart not only scorned but thrust back upon you as an unwanted and worthless gift, believe me, your ideas of chivalry and romance undergo a radical change. I have been through that experience, and my ideas have undergone that change. You come to me fresh from your easy life, with your heart and head full of romance, and you think I ought to forget all that, to forget all that I suffered, and to simply jump at the chance Mr. Jervis offers of being on the same terms with him that I was before. I refuse to do it. I was a girl up to the night of the eleventh of November. I shall never be a girl again," with pathetic bitterness.

"But he has written to you. He has expressed his sorrow for what passed that night. He was thinking only of you."

"Mr. Jervis has never asked me to marry him," said Katey indignantly.

"But he wrote to you."

"Yes, he wrote to me. He said he wanted to see me, he wanted to be friends with me. If I had known at first that he only wanted to be friends, that he only wanted to be on terms with me, do you think that I would have left my home, have ruined my life—for bad as it was, I did ruin it—that I would have exposed myself to the shame and ignominy of standing up publicly as I did in order to save his life? Oh, you can't look at it with my eyes, you can't feel with my heart! You don't understand, Jill, you don't understand."

"But he wrote to you," said Jill.

"You can see the letter if you like," said Katey. "I will show it to you."

"Yes, I would like to see that letter, if you don't mind showing it to me, because, my dear, it isn't that I want to pry into your affairs—why should I? Did I ever want to do so? Could I have any interest but your own? No, a thousand times, no! but I am convinced that this man simply worships the very ground upon which you tread. My dear, he went out of his prison to look his last upon that poor dead soul whom he believed to be you, and I hardly like to tell you, but I heard it afterwards from one of those who was there that he wept over you. The others wouldn't look at him, and he went and prayed. Oh, Katey, you are too hard! You are too hard!"

"I don't think so," said Katey. "Why should I be hard to myself if I had no reason? If I believed that he really cared, why should I shut myself out of heaven? You are not reasonable, Jill. It is because I know that he doesn't care. I daresay he was sorry enough at my death—any man who had known me would have been sorry, believing that I had been done to death as that poor girl was—there is no credit to him in that! And any man, who was a man of honour, would offer to marry a girl who saved his life."

"Katey, you ought to be slapped! On my word, you ought!"

Katey turned and looked at her. "I don't think," she said, shaking her head slowly, "that slapping would help me. But you wanted to see his letter. Well, here it is. If you will read that, you will see it is the letter of a man who is very sorry for what has happened, who would make what restitution he could, but who cares no more than I for this table."

"I don't see," said Jill, holding the letter in her hand without looking at it, "that you need have denied him the interview that he asked you. He told me that he had asked you to see him, if only once. He would have asked you to marry him in that interview. Many men object to writing at such times, and I believe he is one of them. After all, one interview is worth a dozen letters."

"And on the night of the eleventh of November," said Katey, "he told me that if I had written all would have been well, that one letter was worth a dozen interviews."

"Oh, my dear, you are too hard! He was angry, flurried, alarmed for you, thinking only of you. He said many things that he didn't mean, many things that were only meant to steel himself against you."

"I can't see it," said Katey. "Read the letter."

And Jill did read the letter, read it with care, once, twice, even three times. "Katey," she said, at last, "I am sure that you are absolutely wrong in all your thoughts and ideas about Mr. Jervis. It can do you no harm to see him once. If he only wants to be friends with you and to make a certain return for what has gone past, that interview can do you no harm. To my mind, this letter is the letter of a gentleman who is also a man, of a man who is also a gentleman. I think that you are wrecking your life's happiness by a mistaken feeling of pride or some folly of that kind. My dear, don't do it."

"I would rather not see him," said Katey. "I don't ever want to see him again."

"Oh, yes, you do," said Jill, taking the girl's hand and holding it fast in her own; "you know that you are just hungering to see him. I believe that you have steeled yourself into this foolish position of dependence, because anything that you persist in when there is no reason for it is always foolish, and that you are positively afraid that if you once see him your barriers will all be broken down, that wall of reserve and silence which you have built up around yourself will stand no longer."

"You don't understand," said Katey, "how much I have suffered."

"No," said Jill, "I don't; and I don't think you understand that if you have suffered, he has suffered, too, and through you. *You* don't suffer through *him*, because he never asked you to take that step; you took it of your own initiative entirely, and you would blame him for an act of folly which was yours and yours only; but he has suffered entirely through and because of you. My dear, if you had not happened to hear of the trial that morning, Philip Jervis would probably have died a death of shame this very day. It was by the merest chance that you were able to save his life. You are not doing right by him; you know it; your own heart tells you so."

"Then," said Katey, "I prefer to do wrong. It seems to me," she said, turning and looking at Jill searchingly, "that you are very deeply interested in Mr. Jervis's affairs. Why, since you think him so ill-used and me so bad, so ungenerous, so everything that is to be ashamed of, do you not take pity on him yourself?"

Jill got up immediately. "Katey," she said, "you are beside yourself. You have no right to say such a thing as that to me, because I only came here in your interests and with your good at heart. I am

very deeply interested in you, also. If he cared for me, I should count myself a very happy girl to-day --a very happy girl; but it is seldom those who would go through fire and water, through life and death, for a man they love who win the love of such a man as he is. I don't know by what strange freak of nature it is, but nearly always the man that one could love, that one could honour and admire and look up to, the man who is strong and true, throws his love away upon a shiftless girl who, as a rule, isn't worth it. I don't say this of you, Katey, but if the cap fits, I don't in the least mind your putting it on. I am going now. I have done my best, out of the most generous friendship for you both. You have his letter, and I see that it tells you where to write to him; now, I give you fair warning that, if you have not given Mr. Jervis that interview before this day week, I will set John Sylvester on you."

"What?" cried Katey.

"Yes, if you have not seen Mr. Jervis within a week from to-day, I will write to John Sylvester, and I will give him your name and address."

"You would break my confidence?" said Katey.

"No," said Jill; "there would be no broken confidence. I learnt your theatrical name and your theatrical address without any promise and without your will. I learnt it by an accident, and I don't feel myself bound to keep silence. I don't know whether you have driven that unfortunate wretch at Danford out of his small semblance of a mind. I don't know, but I am beginning to have my doubts about it. So now, I am going. I don't think that you have rewarded me very kindly for the trouble I have taken in coming down here to see you, but as sure as I am standing here, Katey, that is what I shall do, so I warn you. And now, good-bye!"

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE STRONG RIGHT ARM!

"The golden age is before us, not behind us."

ST. SIMON.

WHEN Jill Atkinson had fairly gone and Katey realised that the interview was over, she sank down upon the little sofa and hid her face against the cushions. She did not sob or cry her heart out, or do anything of that kind; no, she just laid there, with her brain in a whirl, her heart beating hard, and her firm resolution wavering until it was on the point of giving way altogether. And after a long time she sat up, brushed the heavy hair off her temples and tried to realise all that had happened. What had she said to Jill to make her threaten such a horrible thing as that she would give John Sylvester the clue to her whereabouts? She went over the whole interview, over it again and again, how Jill had said she ought to be slapped—well, she supposed that that was quite true, indeed she knew it was quite true—and then Jill had got angry with her. What had she said to make her so angry? Try as she would, she could not remember only that Jill had said she would let John Sylvester know where he might find her—she would let John Sylvester know where he might find her! She wondered in a dull kind of way whether Jill was a little in love with Philip Jervis herself. Ah, that was what had made her so angry! Well, she supposed that she ought not to have said that, and that Jill had every right to be angry, but she had no right to betray her confidence, and yet, there had been no con-

fidence except in so far as her address in Cronstadt Road was concerned.

Her eyes presently fell upon Jervis's letter, which Jill had laid upon the table after she had read it, and by what curious train of thought I cannot tell you, but the sight of that letter hardened Katey's heart, and, as she put it back in the envelope and locked it away in her desk, she resolutely made up her mind that she would keep to her word that she would not see him, that she would not forget or overlook the past. Jill might do her worst, but Katey made up her mind that she would be firm. So the day went over—and the next—and the next, until the evening of the sixth day had come, when she received a letter from Jill, a characteristic letter enough. "My dear Katey," she said, "I am still frightfully angry with you, and shall be for a long time; but it is no use going on like this, and confidence or no confidence, I have told Mr. Jervis that I have seen you and where he will find you. He also is beginning to feel some of your pride, and he hesitates to force himself upon you against your will. So I leave it to you two to decide for yourselves, and will not let John Sylvester know your whereabouts just yet. I daresay this will make you very angry, but I cannot help that. You must be vexed or not, just as you please. Your friend, Jill Atkinson."

By a later post she received another letter from Jervis. "Miss Atkinson," he said, "has been good enough to tell me that she has been to see you, and has given me your address. I can only reiterate what I said to you in my last letter. My dear child, if at any time you want me, you need only write to my club or to my regiment; you will always know where to find me. The rest I leave to yourself. Yours as always, Phil." And Katey's heart was hardened yet further, until she would have been a very fitting and suitable consort for that exceedingly

tiresome gentleman, King Pharaoh. She received it, and she locked it away with the other, not having the smallest intention of ever replying to either. And so several days went by, days that were weary and unhappy, evenings whose work was becoming stale and unprofitable, nights when sleep refused to be friends with her, let her be as seductive as she would—very unhappy days. They got over somehow, and Katey grew paler and more dejected. She ate less and less, and sat during all her spare hours crouched among the cushions of the old sofa, hugging the pride which had made her so wretched. And then there came an evening when, turning her head, she caught sight of a pair of eyes in the front row of the stalls, a pair of eyes that she knew, a pair of eyes that she dreaded, a face which was utterly repulsive to her, lips that she would have died rather than touch with her own, and her heart seemed to stand still in her breast, while with wild dismay there shot through her brain the words, "Jill has told him! Jill has told him!"

She didn't know how she got through the rest of the play, but there John Sylvester sat, glaring at her furiously, following her every movement with the eyes of a hawk and the stealth of a cat, and time after time her eyes crept round to his as the needle creeps towards the magnet. Oh, what a night it was! She literally staggered into the arms of the clever actor who was playing the lead when she made one of her exits, and ran up against the wing breathless and panting.

"What is the matter, Miss Vere?" he asked. "Don't you feel well?"

"Oh, no!"

"Can I get you anything? Shall I send for some water for you?"

"No. You are very good. It is nothing."

"Why, you look as if you had seen a ghost."

"I have seen worse than a ghost," said Katey.

"Somebody in front?"

"Yes."

"What sort of a somebody? A man?"

"Yes," said Katey, shuddering.

"Oh, well, you know he can't come round here."

"No, but he is—I am afraid of him."

She looked up piteously at the tall actor, who, with the kindly familiarity of the profession, patted her on the elbow and reminded her that strangers could never come behind, that she had only to get into a cab to be safely out of his road. "You are sure you are all right," he said hurriedly, "because I am on in another instant?" Then turned from her and passed on to the stage.

Katey had not to change her dress, but it was the invariable custom of all to go back to their dressing-rooms and just touch up themselves a little so as to keep fresh and trig to the end of the performance. Katey went to her room, which she shared with another girl, quite mechanically and walked straight to the large looking-glass. Her heart was still beating painfully, and her death-like pallor was visible even under her rouge and powder. She had only one hope, that he might not know the locality of the stage door, that she might, as she was free a little before the piece was at an end, change quickly and slip away before he could catch her. Then she had to go back on to the stage again, to move and speak and play her unimportant part through the changeless glare of those terrible eyes. If John Sylvester had suddenly levelled a revolver at her, she would not have been the least surprised; far from it, in fact; but he did nothing of that kind; as a matter of fact, he had come up to town with the restlessness of a disappointed heart and had dropped into the Cornhill Theatre, and had taken the only vacant seat in the house by the purest accident. He had recognized

Katey just as Jill and Miss Jack had done, and so engrossed was he with the dainty little figure in cap and apron flitting hither and thither on the stage, that he never gave a thought to the rest of the great audience, never realised that Jervis was sitting just behind him, that Jervis had seen his start of recognition and was watching him as closely as he was watching Katey. He was not conscious that when he had realised that Katey's part in the play was over—upon which he immediately got up and went out of the theatre—that any one was following him, but Jervis, who had no opinion of John Sylvester's notion of chivalry, was determined at all risks to keep an eye on him, so he turned up the collar of his Inverness and pulled his hat low down over his eyebrows and quietly shadowed him until he had left the theatre. He was near enough to overhear him asking where the stage door was to be found, and to keep him in sight while he prowled up and down the dark narrow street upon which it opened. It is a good way round from the front of the Cornhill Theatre to the stage door, which opens upon a small and very quiet street little more than a lane. Jervis kept in the shadow of a doorway and watched John Sylvester anxiously prowling up and down. What a long time it seemed, and the night was so dark! You could hear footsteps at the other end of the quiet street, and when at last she came, he could plainly from his place of shelter hear John Sylvester say, "Have I found you at last? Is it you, Katey?" They were not then indeed more than a couple of houses from him, but he saw Katey shrink up against the wall and heard her say, "Who told you where I was? I have nothing to say to you. Don't attempt to interfere with me."

"To interfere with you!" Sylvester repeated. "I! I, who have sought you day and night, who have mourned you, loved you! And this is all you have to

say to me! You shall hear me. I swear to you that you shall love me."

"Never!" she flashed out at him.

"Yes! I say yes! Katey," in a softer voice, "has my love, my faithfulness, won nothing from you?"

"Nothing!" she cried. "I loathe you! Your love is an insult, your faithfulness is an impudence! I will have none of you—none of you."

"And that other one——" he began.

"No, you have nothing to do with that other one. He is nothing to you nor to me. If he were anything to me it would be no business of yours, but I will not have his name brought into this discussion. I would never have looked at you under any circumstances, you have made me hate you too thoroughly. Why need you force me to tell you all this once more? I have said it to you over and over again. It is perfectly useless for you to waste another moment on me."

"But I swear I will," he rejoined. "I have sworn that my wife you shall be, and I mean to keep my word. Katey, don't tempt me any further; don't try me too much. Take me, and I shall be as clay in your hands—as wax; spurn me, and I may become even your—murderer!"

He advanced a step or two towards her, and Katey made a rush to gain the busier end of the street. Just at the doorway, however, Sylvester caught her, and in his huge grasp she was as powerless as a kitten in the mouth of a bull-dog.

"No, no, don't do it!" she cried, in tones of horror, which would have put perhaps any other man in the world completely out of conceit with her. "If you dare to kiss me, I will kill myself!"

But John Sylvester was gone beyond daring. He encircled her with one arm and with his free hand forced her face upwards towards his own, and then—something happened, for a hand closed like a vice of

iron upon the back of his neck, and the next moment he found himself flung violently into the gutter.

"Lie there, you coward!" said a voice that he knew but too well. "You pestilential hound! Keep your loathly kisses for women that want them. Miss Vincent, let me see you safe out of the reach of this amiable relative of yours. Pray, don't tremble so; really, he isn't worth it. I happened to be in the theatre, and I saw him recognise you. I knew he would try to catch you here, and so I followed him, feeling that you would be none the worse for my presence. I know your address; you are much too unnerved to go home by train, do let me drive you home. You see, I have not forced myself upon you, and if you will let me see you safe into your own house, I promise you I will not even speak to you on the way. I can't say more, Katey."

Now Katey, as a matter of fact, was trembling so violently that argument and even the legitimate use of her legs were both alike out of the question. She clung to him with both hands, her teeth chattering with fear, her legs shaking under her, her hands trembling and her eyes almost starting from her head with fright.

"Oh, take me home," she whispered, between her chattering teeth, "take me home. I am so frightened."

So Jervis supported her to the corner of the street and chartered the smartest-looking cab that he could see, helped her in and got in after her.

"Would you like the glass down?" he asked.

"No," she replied, still breathless with the excitement through which she had just gone.

Apparently she was minded to keep him to his word, for she sat back in her corner, not speaking, not moving, except for the trembling of her limbs. And Jervis sat in his, soldierly, upright, calm to all outward appearance, that is, nor did he once open his lips until they were passing the Knightsbridge Barracks.

"Are you cold? Sure you wouldn't like the window down?" he asked, as he might have asked his maiden aunt, or the daughter of his colonel, or anybody with whom he was on polite but distant terms.

"Just as you like," she replied; "I am not at all cold."

"You are, of course, thoroughly upset and frightened, but I am only anxious that you should not take cold. We have a long way yet to go, you know."

"I like it up," she replied.

Then they relapsed into silence once more, until they had got a little way beyond High Street station. She looked at him once or twice, at first furtively, then with an imploring expression which, as he was looking straight ahead, he did not see. Once she half put out her hand, and then she said, in a very meek voice,—

"I am really very much obliged to you."

"Not at all," said he, politely. "I am only too glad that I was able to be of any use to you. That fellow is really quite a dangerous sort of person. I think he ought to be put in a lunatic asylum, myself. I am afraid it will be rather annoying for you if he chances to wait on other nights. Of course, it was lucky that I happened to be there, but I have only three days more leave, and really, I think it would be best if you were to speak to the police about it."

"Yes," she replied, and then they relapsed into silence again.

On they went, down the broad Hammersmith Road, past the great gilded gates at Holland Park, on between the twinkling rows of lights, still in that polite and dreadful silence. At last Katey could stand it no longer.

"Phil," she said, in a very small voice, "aren't you even going to speak to me?"

Well, need I write any further? I don't think so.

That one little simple question, asked in that tone of pathetic misery, was quite enough for a man like Jervis. He no longer leant his arms upon the door of the cab, staring out into the gaslit night; oh, no, for in a moment all the past was blotted out, all the future became assured, all the present was turned into Paradise and yet he only uttered one word, "KATEY!"

THE END

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